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BLACK MONASTERY

BY
ALADAR KUNCZ



HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

NEW YORK

Translated from the original Hungarian

A Fekete Kolostor

BY RALPH MURRAY

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The author of this book is dead. He died in June 1931, after an illness during which he used his last strength to finish *Black Monastery*. He was born half an hour before midnight on New Year's Eve, 1885-6. His one great work, this book, was published in May 1931, seven weeks before his death.

He was a Hungarian of Transylvania, which is now in Rumania. Before the appearance of *Black Monastery* he was not famous outside the circle of initiates who knew him as a biographer and a brilliant essayist, a literary eclectic and a very gentle friend. Of this book, in little, impoverished, post-War Hungary twenty thousand copies have been sold.

R. M.

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CHAPTER I

LAST DAYS OF FREEDOM IN PARIS

IN the summer of 1914, in the weeks preceding the outbreak of the War, I was spending a holiday in a little French seaside place.

My coming to be in that little tucked-away Breton village was one of the consequences of my Francophile loves. In the decade before the War it became almost a passion with us Hungarians to investigate French literature and things French in general. When I arrived for the first time in Paris, in the summer of 1909, I had wept for sheer joy in the tinkling one-horse cab that took me from the Gare de l'Est to the Quartier Latin. Since then I had spent every summer, and once fourteen months on end, in various parts of France, especially Brittany.

It was my writer friend Orbok who called my attention to that particular Breton village near Morlaix in Finisterre. That summer he was there too with his friend Jeanette whom he married during the War, in Spain.

We were the only Hungarians staying there. I remember the two of us organised a great Breton festival on one of the last days of July.

It was that day that the first sign of the catastrophe of war reached us. We had arranged a torchlight procession to the sea, and to the strains of our band we set off. We had just reached the highest point of the shore, looking out over the moonlit sea, when Orbok and his dancer passed me

running forward. As he saw me he shouted back: 'We have declared war on Serbia.' Cold reality in the merry din of that singing, fiddling procession. The leader of the procession brandished his torch at the silent sky till it glowed blood-red.

Therewith was my care-free life at an end. At twenty-eight I had finished life, or at least had done with the old way of living and the old world.

This is not an afterthought. I felt at that moment instinctively that a world conflagration was coming. The next morning I telegraphed home to three different places for money. Everyone else, and especially the French holiday-makers, living in complete ignorance of everything in general, thought that the clash between Austria-Hungary and Serbia could be settled by a little private war, and I argued excitedly that every European country would be drawn into it.

But I did not care whether my theories were right or wrong. I wanted as soon as possible to reach Paris and from there to set off home. I could hardly wait till the first of the month, when my money should arrive by telegraph. The first came, but no money. Instead, general mobilisation.

It was Saturday afternoon. Everybody was waiting in the streets. The beach was empty. At midday the news had already gone round that the order for mobilisation would arrive any moment. I went once more to the post office to inquire. The five hundred francs which that morning had been despatched by wire from Budapest did not arrive.

About half-past two the clerk of the Mairie arrived on a bicycle, with ceaseless bell-ringing, from the direction of Morlaix. He was hugging a black portfolio under his arm. The mobilisation order.

At three o'clock the toxin shrieked. The senseless clanging of the village church bell was a worthy heralding of the world's gloomy change of scenery. To feverish imagination everything was now a play-acting or the pictures of a dream.

Old women in black with white head-dresses came hurry-

ing. Suddenly they were all over the space round the platform which had been set up in front of the church, like big, white-crested, black birds. Then the men, as many of them as were at home, arrived in their Sunday clothes.

The holiday-makers silently made way for the assembling villagers. They had first right to hear the news.

In deathly silence the mayor read out the order for general mobilisation.

Then petrified dumbness. Not a voice applauded. Someone sobbed, once, and the crowd stirred, and everyone went their various ways home.

In the hotel there was a never-ceasing buzz of excitement. The men were looking at time-tables. The father, husband and three brothers of the hotel proprietress set off to join their units. For the rest there were few Frenchmen among the holiday-makers. They should have arrived by the Saturday evening train from the neighbouring towns, but now they did not come, nor ever later.

We—Orbok, Jeanette, a Russian sculptor and his mistress, and I—held a despairing council of action in the drawing-room of the Bon Accueil. None of us had any money, but we had somehow to reach Paris, and it was said that not even the evening express from Morlaix was to leave. But if it went it would undoubtedly be the last train to Paris.

We should have to go to Morlaix by the motor-bus. Even by that means it took a good three-quarters of an hour.

I decided to ask the hotel proprietress for money for the journey. But she, poor thing, was beside herself with grief. It was quite useless rattling at her door or trying to open it. From inside only her despairing sobbing came in answer.

Meanwhile the bus had gone.

We were already discussing walking all the way to Paris when a clean-shaven, knickerbockered man in the lounge addressed us in German and asked us, if we were going to Paris, would we take him with us. He had heard we were Hungarians. He was German, he could not speak French

and he was afraid he might meet with unpleasantness on the way.

‘Haben Sie Geld?’ we shouted at him all together.

‘Das schon,’ the Prussian said, grinning, and pulled out a handful of gold from his pocket.

We all provided ourselves with money and agreed that we should meet within a quarter of an hour in front of the hotel and from there set off on foot in all haste for Morlaix. The Russian sculptor and his mistress also helped themselves from the gold on the Prussian’s palm, but, probably on the woman’s advice, they thought it better not to come with us.

I had a room in a little side-street, in a house in the middle of a garden. Only as I was going through the door set in the high stone wall did I think of the woman in white with whom the night before I had had such a strange meeting.

I had forgotten her in the excitement. The whole of the day before I had spent at sea on the yacht of a Dutch painter. I was restless, and the invitation was an act of charity to my nerves. In the evening I dined at the Bon Accueil, and towards midnight I set off for home. As I came into the garden I noticed, framed in the open, lighted window of the building, a woman in white. I had once before seen her for a moment. Remarkably deep-blue eyes in a sunburnt face. I knew that she was the wife of a captain, and was on a holiday with her husband.

The silent, moonlit garden and the woman in white standing at the window made me stop, as though I had disturbed something. I was in no mood for seeking an adventure. But the picture held me. The old house, the high stone wall, the silent garden asleep in the moonlight; everything like a mirage which was soon to dissolve.

I spoke to the woman, and she nodded, stepped back into the room, put out the lamp and came quickly down into the garden.

I learnt from our talk that she had seen me long ago. There were some sewing-girls next door to my room, who

all day long sewed and sang. It was my landlady's sewing workroom. I used to learn the words of the songs the girls sang, all about the sad loves of fishermen. I used to write in the afternoons, and I left those Breton love-songs among my papers.

The woman in white had been in my room when I was not there, and looked at my incomprehensible scribblings, and found also the Breton songs.

I shall never forget the perfume that flowed from that woman's hair, face, neck. I shall never forget the warmth of her body nor that dazing, exalting, maddening kiss we exchanged before the door of the house. Later I understood what that was. A farewell to woman, instinctive, when my brain could have no conception of what was in store for me. Then it filled me only with a strange happiness, and when I took my lips from hers, it was dawn. A sweet-smelling, softly windy, pearl-coloured dawn. I must have felt the touch of it on my face, and only then lifted mine from the woman's in surprise.

It was only a kiss, and how pure a kiss, and yet perhaps no woman ever belonged to me as that stranger.

Now I remembered her, as I ran up to my room to pack a few things into my bag. Only in the morning I had learned that she came from some Norman town, was really the daughter of an official in Morlaix, and that her husband had been called up some days ago.

I arrived panting in my room. From the next room came the rattle of sewing-machines, and singing. The sewing-girls sang:

Allons, partons, belles,
Partons pour la guerre,
Partons, il est temps . . .

I listened unconsciously as I hurriedly packed together a change of linen, stuffed my toilet necessities into my bag, and was on the point of going when the door flew open and

the woman in white almost fell into the room. Behind her the door remained open, so that the sewing-girls in the next room could hear everything she said. But she did not care about them. She flung herself down before me, clasping her hands, and cried in a voice that sent a shiver down my back: 'Don't go away! Don't be so mad! They'll kill you. Oh, I know those Parisians. If they know who you are, they'll kill you. . . .'

For a moment I stared helplessly at her. In those feverish moments I could not realise what an incomprehensible phenomenon was this woman, whose husband had been called up and who now knelt before a foreigner, an enemy from one day to the next, and cried mad words for which she could draw on herself the hate and contempt of her kind.

Perhaps she was merely hysterical. But I salute her courage.

But in me then only the instinct of flight was working, and the despairing call of home, and they thrust that lovely and desirable woman away from me.

I stammered a few meaningless words of consolation, then tore myself from her arms and ran back to the hotel, where Orbok, the knickerbockered Prussian—I never learnt who he was nor what became of him in Paris—and Jeanette were waiting for me.

It was six o'clock in the evening. We had two hours and a half to cover a distance which usually required four hours to walk.

We set off running. The holiday-makers, still clustered in groups, made way for us with hostile stares. The Bretons standing in front of their low houses glowered at us. No one waved us good-bye.

The Brest to Paris express was crowded when it ran into Morlaix. It was a desperate scuffle to squeeze in. And once in we had to spend the fourteen-hour journey to Paris jammed

into a corner of the corridor. The Frenchmen travelling with us were friendly. The journey altogether gave more the effect of an outing than anything else: only the crowding and the relentless struggle for places at every stop showed that it was a question of something deadly earnest. We were travelling in the last train of peace-time; and with its packed corridors and the men hanging in clusters on the steps it was at the same time the first train of the War.

After travelling all night, slower and slower as we drew nearer to Paris, we ran into the Gare de Montparnasse, and when we got out of our train we found ourselves confronted by a cordon of detectives. Every traveller had to pass through them. Their faces were dark with suspicion. That was our first glimpse of the French military spirit. Till then I had no idea of it.

On the square of Montparnasse there was not a single taxi. Every motor vehicle had already been mobilised. There was a regular fight among the travellers for the occasional wandering horse-cabs.

We said good-bye to the Prussian and thanked him for helping us to Paris. He said he was going to his Embassy and then would attempt the journey home. He gave us a meeting-place in a café for the evening if he should not be able to leave. We never saw him again.

Orbok, Jeanette and I went first to the Gare de Lyon. We had read in the *Matin* that in the course of the morning two last trains would leave for Switzerland. This was supposed to have been arranged by the French Government for the benefit of foreigners.

In front of the station there surged a huge crowd, soldiers with fixed bayonets keeping it back from a rush at the trains. Later I learnt from those who had been jammed in that gathering crowd since four o'clock in the morning that only mobilised Frenchmen were allowed access to the trains. Only one elderly Hungarian schoolmaster succeeded in passing the cordon of police and ticket-inspectors: he brandished

the papers of his commission in the Honvéd reserve and shouted at them that he too was *mobilisé*. Three days later he arrived in Budapest. Those who were even one pace behind him could not pass through, and the same day I met them before the Consulate.

It was no use wasting more time at the Gare de Lyon. I said good-bye to Orbok and his friend and went off to my old hotel, the Hotel Malherbe in the Rue Vaugirard.

The proprietress of the hotel, Madame Azas, received me with eyes red from weeping. They had called up every waiter; her husband and her brothers were to join their units the next day. The sweet old southern French woman and her husband met me with unaltered warmth. As I had only a couple of francs in my pocket I asked for a room on the yard.

Monsieur Azas helped me to look up the address of the Consulate in the big Parisian directory, his hand trembling as he turned the pages.

When I reached the Consulate I discovered to my greatest surprise that there was a very great number indeed of Austro-Hungarian subjects left in Paris. The larger part of these were Parisian workmen, but all too many travellers were also there. Our Consulate for days past had been sending anxious inquirers away with the reassurance that there was still plenty time to leave. There was no reason at all for panic. There would be a train in any case.

Now, however, when after half an hour's elbowing and shoving I reached the offices of the Consulate, there was no sign of the calm of the previous days. The officials were rushing about white-faced from one paper-strewn room to another. One of them drew me up a certificate declaring me to have reported for military service. At the moment it was impossible to leave. He flapped his hands helplessly and almost sobbed: 'Who would have thought it, who would have thought it. . . .'

The Consulate building had become our one and only refuge. Those men, women and children whom chauvinistic

landlords had turned out of their lodgings moved in there and waited to be rescued.

I found several acquaintances among the crowd, the most important of whom were my two colleagues Soltész and Németh, who were also, as it turned out, at the Hotel Malherbe. It was they who told me about the dawn scene at the Gare de Lyon.

During the day the struggling crowd of Austro-Hungarian subjects round the Consulate so increased that a detachment of police was sent to keep order. The blue-coated, flat-capped gendarmes shoved the waiting crowd into queue formation, then crossed their arms on their expanded chests and watched us in silent contempt. Their stern faces only broke into a smile when some patriot inquired of them who this scarecrow collection were and having received his information spat towards the waiting queue. . . .

At the Consulate it was believed a train would be granted by the French Government for the benefit of the Austro-Hungarians. So the crowd continued to wait in front of the building for the announcement of the train's departure.

At three o'clock the Consul appeared on the balcony and announced that he was now going to treat with the French authorities in the matter of a train, and would return with their answer in half an hour.

The Consul's car came to the door, and the crowd silently parted for him as he drove off. No one believed much in the success of his efforts. Some even said he only wanted to use the announcement of his mission as a pretext for slipping out of the building.

That was not true. About six o'clock he again appeared on the balcony. He was very pale, and his voice trembled. From the first we could see that he had not succeeded.

The Consul spoke to the crowd in French. They shouted to him to speak German. But the little, frightened man continued to speak French, because, as he said, he did not wish to occasion groundless hostility. He had anyhow but little to

say. The French Government returned a refusal to the request for trains.

'You must now remain here in the hands of the French authorities,' ended the Consul. 'You must submit to their orders. I hope the French, in spite of the imperious exigences of war, will never forget the sacred injunctions of humanity.'

That was the end. No train. The air had suddenly grown oppressive, as though the houses were closer round us.

The door of the Consulate opened once more.

His face ashy grey, the little black-suited Austro-Hungarian Consul came out. He passed through us. No one said anything. He got into his car, and slowly, so slowly, like a mourning-coach, drove away.

With wide eyes we stared after him. The last man had gone who belonged to us, and we were alone in a foreign, hostile world.

Not far from us some dragoons, their band playing, passed across the square. People waved to them from the windows, threw flowers to them. They sat their restless horses with conscious ease.

In frozen silence we watched them. A beam from the setting sun fell on them: in the street where we stood the evening shadows had already conquered. The windows and doors of the Consulate were being shut up. We stood there with the policemen round us, huddled together, despised and outcast, rubbish thrown out into the street.

Such Austro-Hungarian subjects as were without food and lodging remained round the Consulate. They were eventually marshalled by the police and herded into the Lycée Condorcet. There men, women and children had to remain together without sleeping accommodation or proper food till at last on August 4 they were crowded into cattle-trucks and sent off to some internment camp in the provinces.

The procession of those tattered, humiliated wretches through the streets of Paris to the Gare d'Ivry was a pitiful sight. Children, four by four, women, and then the men, carrying bags and bundles. The same men who now under police guard were leaving Paris, watched by an indifferent or derisively abusive crowd, had been only a few days before industrious servants of the city's trade, in many cases indispensable. Their children went to French schools, their wives were perhaps Frenchwomen. Or they were travellers, brought to France by their enthusiasms.

The French Government issued placards promising us transport to a neutral state and informing us that we were to report ourselves within twenty-four hours at our district police-station. Subjects of enemy states who did not report, the notices continued, would be considered as spies, and, if they tried to leave Paris, in the event of their capture would be treated as such on the spot. The Parisian mob left us in no doubt as to what was meant by that. Nor did the authorities, who on small evidence sent any suspect to the Conciergerie and from there to the moat of Vincennes.

I too reported myself at the police offices in the Rue La Cases, specially enlarged for the occasion. It took me six or seven hours of hard elbowing, shouldering and shoving till I at last obtained my papers allowing me to stay in Paris under police supervision till the 15th, and ordering me to report myself on the morning of that day at the Gare d'Ivry, when I should be sent to Périgueux.

Paris was swept by hate of the foreigner, by the spy-scare, the spirit which the first day foully murdered Jaurès, which in the name of national courage and fighting-will sent flag-waving demonstrations marching through the streets and in the evening darkness looted or destroyed the shops and houses of German or other enemy citizens.

It was not advisable for foreigners to show themselves in the streets. Not only police and detectives were constantly demanding identification papers but the self-constituted detectives of the street repeatedly held people up, especially blond men. For someone to be blond meant that he was a German, and German meant spy. It was, however, no wonder people jumped at shadows in the dark, with Germany threatening Paris in the first weeks. And the excitement was fanned by the newspapers. With the help of the Press the credulousness of the French was developed to the point of forming quite a special picture of the "Boche" and never wanting to believe that they did not all have square heads and smell like niggers.

If I had to go somewhere in those days I preferred to go by Underground. Here the mood was quite different. Here sat the real Parisians, grave-faced. For events had not really been such that men liked to listen to demonstrating street-crowds yelling their "*à Berlin.*" No, the streets were not attractive. Here below in the Underground, however, there was silence. I remember once, in one of those crowded carriages, a white-haired, benevolent-looking old General, object of anxious, almost entreating glances, suddenly, without anyone asking him, saying: 'Don't be afraid, my children, the "Boche" is not going to set foot inside Paris.' That was the first time I heard the word "Boche," and then I had no idea that for five years it was to be my label, all-explanatory, and in French eyes final.

At any other time I would have given a good deal to be able to spend two weeks in Paris. Now it had become my prison, and I had but one desire, to flee from it as quickly as possible.

On the day of my arrival I had at once borrowed enough money from a friend I met by the Consulate to enable me to live sparsely till the day of my internment. I have never

in my life been so economical as I was in those two weeks. On food I spent sixty centimes a day. . . . I ate no breakfast, at midday only a couple of buns and in the evening would consume a forty-centime chop in a restaurant in one of those little side-streets to the right of the Panthéon. Soltész and Németh came there too.

Soltész had nothing in common with Paris or the French, and could blame or detest them without it being a recantation of his past, his highest expectations, richest experiences. Németh was a writer as well as a teacher, and was all for Claudel and the Dadaists and so-called Simultaneists. He and his friend Révész, also a schoolmaster and budding essayist, had come together to Paris to study the new literary movement. I was a decadent and had come to Paris to worship Mauras and Mallarmé and Verlaine. I wore a monocle and drank absinthe. Though that phase of my life, I had decided even before I left Budapest that year, was to end. One more sip from the heady drink of *l'heure blanche* and then back to sober, hard-working—family life.

Soltész and Németh were in Paris for the first time. They too had been held back by the Consulate's assurances till the last moment, when it was too late to leave. We often cursed that unhappy office in our evening talks at the Malherbe or as we walked about the city fretting ceaselessly and speculating gloomily as to what was to come.

We went to visit other Hungarians at their hotels. They were bound eventually for Châteauroux. They were in touch with yet others and were full of unreliable information as to what the internment was to be like. We all thought it was to be temporary and even argued as to whether we should be sent to Spain or Switzerland.

Meanwhile the days passed. The time was near when we were to leave Paris.

One day Révész came to see us and told us that he could procure Németh and myself a *permis de séjour* for Paris. Jean Royère, the editor of the *Phalange*, the Simultaneist literary

review, was also a higher official of the city of Paris. He could perhaps do something for us.

We went to see Royère in his office. A man of middle height, brown-skinned and very dark, with a big beard, got up from his writing-desk when we came in. Révész explained our case to him. Royère at once wrote a letter of introduction for all three of us to a friend of his in the Police, who wrote us out a permit on the backs of our evacuation forms for a temporary stay in Paris. It would have been a great opportunity for anyone who had a little money and who could manage to procure permission to stay somewhere near the Spanish frontier, where it would be an easy matter to slip across. But for me it only meant making internment harder, for I was plagued by the idea that this, and not internment, was the way to freedom, though according to the French Government's promise internment should not have lasted longer than the time of mobilisation.

Révész had a little money. He decided to stay in Paris. Németh, whose money, like mine, was running out, said he would do whatever I did. The money question might have been solved somehow. The proprietress of the Hotel Malherbe readily offered us rooms and breakfast on credit. Food I could surely have procured somewhere. But I did not want to stay in Paris. I wanted to get out of France as quickly as possible. And the situation at the moment being that the Germans were threatening Paris more and more every day, Paris might become the most difficult place to leave.

I went to the American Consulate, which was now concerned with our protection. There I was directed to a former Austro-Hungarian Consular official called Popper. This gentleman, when I asked whether I could not receive money from home through the American Consulate, was as startled as if I had asked him to give it me. He advised me in any case not to remain in Paris. 'It would be a different matter if you had some trade or other. You could at any

rate work for the French. But a teacher . . . We can on no account give any assistance.'

Thus spoke Mr. Pepper. I thanked him for this advice which clearly had but the one object of ridding himself of me.

That evening two of the other Hungarians packed. They were to leave the next morning. One of them forced me to accept one of his suits. I had only one suit with me, and Heaven knew when I should see the luggage again that I had left in the Breton seaside place.

I had a whole day more in Paris and was to leave only in the morning of the day after that.

The next day I said good-bye to Paris, walking the streets from morning till night in a dull misery of sorrow.

The gilding light of the August sun flooded the whole Luxembourg Garden as that afternoon I came into it. The leaves of the trees and bushes were already turning red here and there. Big patches of sunlight trembled on the pale grass under the trees, early autumn sunlight. Bright-clothed women passed in the shade of the avenues, or children chasing their hoops. The water of the fountain hissed gleaming upwards, spread out and fell softly back. And by the fountains the bird-man was standing. He was not concerned with wars and world commotions. He had come to his birds as he had come every afternoon for many years, to feed them lovingly, to each its favourite food. Far away men killed one another, while he in his seclusion sowed friendship among the birds.

I went all over the garden again, to the Medici fountain, Verlaine's marble portrait, the statue of wistful George Sand, the steps of the Luxembourg Museum, and everywhere memories crowded up as though they had been till then held in enchantment.

I set to walking with sunk head up and down, up and down, facing the one question—shall I stay or shall I go with the others?

It lasted perhaps for hours. Only one thing was certain, that it meant two totally different lives, a choice between two sets of experiences, of which not the slightest forecast was possible. As though it were a question of—shall I go to the right or to the left? Finally I fortified myself in the knowledge that I could not well do otherwise than follow the others, not taking advantage of privileges for which incalculable sacrifices might be demanded of me.

Then I went more cheerfully to the Montparnasse district police headquarters to inform them that I intended to leave the next day and had no use for my permission to stay.

An official was sitting at the table. He looked at my evacuation form.

'It is all in order. What do you want?'

I said the *permis de séjour* was on the back, and I did not want to use it.

'That doesn't matter,' he said with a wave of his hand. 'Do you imagine such a permit would last for any time? In a couple of days you would in any case have been called in and sent to some internment camp.'

I saw that I had to deal with a talkative, friendly enough fellow. I asked him what this internment was like.

I shall not forget what happened then. He raised both hands as though to push something away—was it my question or the idea of internment?—and then with an expression of great sadness, as though in pity, said only:

'Oh, ça. . . .'

Everything was in that word. I departed. He had shown me greater kindness than the representative of the Austro-Hungarian Consulate in Paris.

It was already evening when I left the police offices. First I went home, but I did not find my friends there. Of course, they had gone to dine. As I came out of the Malherbe a pleasant smell of food reached me. There was the Chope de l'Odéon, where I used to eat in the days when I was a free man. And on my last evening I would eat such a dinner as

I had in the old days. It made no difference if the few francs in my pocket stayed there or not.

The meal and the half-litre of wine with which I accompanied it had curious consequences. To begin with I lit an expensive cigar, and then, my meal ended, went out onto the warm, sweet-smelling Place de l'Odéon. A longing seized me for warmth and kindness. I did not want love. Only something homelike, where on my last evening among this crowd I could go and say good-bye. A symbol, some substitute for my family, somewhere where they would know who I was and where if they did not love me they at least did not hate me and where I could say: 'I have come to say good-bye. I do not know what is going to happen to me, nor where they will take me to. But I have come to say good-bye.'

It was a curious feeling. And I do not myself know why I connected it with the picture of a blonde Russian girl who lived with her mother in a hotel on the Boulevard St. Michel. I had met them several times two years before at Nogent-sur-Marne. Long, dark-blond hair and mild blue eyes: she always used to walk with a white Russian greyhound, she played Chopin and knew the French lyrical poets.

They must have been surprised when I walked in with my bouquet in my hand. We talked for a long time, a little sadly but warmly. Then I said good-bye, unsteadily. Perhaps they were astonished or misunderstood my emotion. I do not know. The girl's slim, warm hand trembled a little in mine.

It was after ten o'clock when I reached home, the thought of to-morrow's journey plaguing me badly, now. Madame Azas was still working behind the glass door of her office. I asked for my bill, and only took fright at what I was doing when the woman was counting the days. What if I had not enough to pay? And what was the use anyhow of asking for the bill? She herself had said she did not mind waiting. But it didn't matter. After that copious dinner how I picked up the old cheerful habits again. . . .

There was just half a franc left in my pocket when I had paid the bill, just as on the day of mobilisation in the little Breton seaside place. I did not care. It might be just as ridiculous for me to take money with me as for an intending suicide to look in his purse before he killed himself to see if he had money enough or not.

CHAPTER II

QUARANTINE IN PÉRIGUEUX

THE next day at dawn the hotel proprietress woke me with knocking at my door. I must have been dreaming about something very beautiful, and I still clung to my dream till consciousness woke in me and I remembered.

Soltész, Németh and I left the Malherbe together, and went down the little, sleeping street which held so many pictures for me of music and loving and happiness. Everything let me go so dumbly. Could I tear myself away, turn my back on it all without looking back once more, and once more?

The Gare d'Ivry is one of Paris' goods stations. The long line of cattle-trucks was waiting for us on the first track. There was a little crowd of people standing about in front of those trucks, staring at the height up which they had to clamber. Out of the gaps of the wide-pushed sliding doors there gaped darkness where pale faces were dimly seen. But sooner or later we had to make up our minds and clamber into one of the trucks.

It was noon when our train started. When we were out of the gloomy station building light streamed in to make of the other shadows in our truck human beings. There were about thirty of them, so there was not much room. Most of them were Germans, among them two whole families, from grandparents to grandchildren. It was curious to see how the children had come to resemble the French type, regular *gosses* though their parents were typical Bavarians.

As soon as the train started they began to eat. If it had not been for the chilly, anxious atmosphere you would have

thought they were off on an excursion. Everyone was fairly depressed. Only one Viennese girl with painted lips could not stand that gloomy silence. She began to sing a mixture of French and German songs. She had the most varied collection of instruments in her handbag, and produced out of it first an ocarina, then a mouth-organ, then something else. The German fathers were somewhat pained at the girl's blasphemous merriment, but the children hung on every grimace of her accompanying by-play, which was probably out of the programme of some suburban Parisian café.

The girl's good-humour did not last long. Towards evening there was a movement among the travellers to solve the question of arranging themselves for the night. It appeared that in the depths of the truck three Tirolese workmen had with their stacked luggage staked out far too big a space for themselves. When someone tried to force them out of their stronghold they justified themselves saying they had to take care of a sick man. The complainants would not believe it. Thereupon the Tirolese pulled aside the luggage and there appeared, stretched on coats and bundles, a young fellow with chalk-white face and tired eyelids he could hardly lift as the people stared at him.

The painted Viennese girl too went nearer the sick man, and suddenly cried:

'Bist du nett, Rudi?'

A pale smile shone on the sick face. The Viennese girl waited no longer, broke through to him, knelt down beside him, kissed him, arranged his couch for him and then little by little heard Rudi's story.

He had been a waiter, apparently, in the café where the girl was cashier and variety-turn in one. They had made friends. Two months ago Rudi had found a better job; he came to see the girl once or twice, and then just disappeared. He had had a collision on his bicycle with a motor-car, had been badly hurt and received severe concussion, and was taken into a hospital. When the war broke out he was thrown

out of the hospital. Then he lay in his own room, but the day before two detectives had come and ordered him to leave for Périgueux with the rest.

There was general indignation. Other people had worse things to tell about the way the authorities had behaved, and a great chatter rose in the truck. A German father offered me a sardine sandwich, and I accepted gratefully, for I had had nothing since my mighty meal of the night before. We pushed the sliding doors as far apart as they would go, and I went to sleep with the wind in my face.

Once I was woken in a station by someone flashing a light into the truck and a soft voice asking:

'Avez-vous de petits bébés?'

Red Cross nurses gave bread and milk to the children. Then we went on again.

The next day at about six o'clock in the morning we arrived at Périgueux.

It was only then we realised exactly what had happened to us. We boarded the train voluntarily in Paris only to find ourselves arrested in Périgueux. The threats of the placards, the promise of transport to a neutral state, everything had led up to our setting off to prison without police herding, only to find ourselves arrested in the truest sense of the word by the local police.

Périgueux station was crowded with soldiers waiting for us, bayonets fixed. A fat, sweating man with a red face, white drill trousers and a worn tail-coat, ran up and down in great excitement in front of the train. He was the head of the Périgueux police. He gave orders for the unmarried men to form up in a column of fours. Everyone had to carry his own luggage. Two well-dressed men had such enormous travelling trunks that it would have taken two men to lift them. The men looked like countrymen of mine.

The police chief and some special constables stopped by

the big trunks and shook their heads. A soldier remarked with a leering laugh:

'It looks as if the swine had brought their coffins with them.' We were presumed to know no French.

It was decided that anyone who could not carry his luggage and who had money could have it sent by cart. The cart was quickly filled with bags and baskets.

The family column was beside ours—men, women and children. It seemed they were to go a separate place. From such groups as these were later formed the family camps where the treatment was altogether better than elsewhere. Such unmarried men, too, who had connections enough, could be assigned to a family camp.

The station was full of shouting and confusion and rushing to and fro. The disposition of the luggage and the formation of the various divisions did not go particularly easily. Good-byes were being said. The Viennese girl threw herself sobbing over white-faced Rudi.

At last order was obtained and the din quietened. The officers gave their orders; the soldiers quickly ranged themselves in front, behind and in a file beside us.

For a minute or two there was silence, and then we heard the clamour of the crowd waiting in front of the station. The silence of the station seemed to amplify that ominous sound. Then we realised that the town public was waiting for us; and we understood that our escort was also our guard.

The order was given to start. The police chief's hairy, bluish hand waved at us to hurry.

A vast clamour of shouting received us on the little square outside the station. The square and the street leading to it were full of old men, and women in black, and children. Curses and stones hurtled at us. Those nearest us struck at us with sticks and umbrellas.

At the price of stone-throwing, blows and spitting we came through the greater part of the crowd. Those who were standing along the street or who came along beside us con-

tented themselves with shouting. One pretty girl ran panting crazily beside our column, shook her fist at us and asked excitedly of one of the escorting soldiers:

'Where are you taking them to? Don't give them anything to eat, will you!'

The soldier replied with a grin:

'*Nom d'un chien!* Do you think we are going to feed them? We're going to shoot the whole lot.'

The girl clapped her hands, and as she saw that I was looking at her she twisted her fresh, downy face into a grimace and spat at me.

Then we arrived. After our reception we should not have been surprised at being clapped into the darkest of dungeons. We halted in a little, narrow street. As I was in the rear fours I had to wait several minutes in anxious curiosity as to where we had been brought. The first thing I saw throwing light on the matter was a name over a high iron gate: *Dépôt Laës*. It was in gilt letters, so it could not very well be the name of a jail. Soon I found it was an empty garage. By the time the rear of the column filed into the yard the only room left was in the loft of the building.

We went up a winding, wooden staircase into a bad-smelling room. Here seventy of us had to find room to sleep, in straw strewn on the floor. I and some others threw down our bags and fled half stifled from the place, for the air was thick with flying chaff and dust while everyone was searching for a place for himself.

The long, narrow yard ended in a stone wall. By the wall there was a pump, and to the left of this was the entrance to the cellar. Over the cellar was another room where were benches and machines. Here we were not allowed in.

We inspected everything, and despaired. It was obvious at first glance that nothing could be done to make quarters for a hundred and fifty of us here even tolerable. There were piles of iron and tin sheets lying about in the yard. They gave us at least somewhere to sit.

Meanwhile a table had been set up in the yard and the police chief and his assistant seated themselves behind it. We had to queue up and show our identification papers. It was announced that we were to hand over all our papers, because later we should be searched, and if anything were found on us we should be severely punished.

My papers consisted of various letters of introduction and papers from French and Hungarian authorities stating the aim of my studies in France and asking the French to give me every assistance, and my evacuation papers. I handed them all over in a bundle. The red-nosed *commissaire* looked at them and nodded as though it were the most natural thing in the world that someone should arrive there with such recommendations.

A pleasant smell of cooking spread towards us from one corner of the yard. For two days my only food had been the sardine sandwich which the Bavarian father gave me. There was no resisting that food smell, and I went off towards where supper was preparing.

A little fat woman with hair like a crow's nest was stirring peas in a huge cauldron. She had short red arms, so short that it was almost a miracle that she could manipulate her long wooden spoon with them. Her face was aflame, her grey hair clung damply to her forehead. She was no attractive nor benevolent apparition, but in consideration of the important function she was fulfilling we stared at her as greedily as if it had been herself we wanted to devour.

Supper was ready at about eight o'clock. Everyone filed past the fat little woman and to each she dispensed a spoonful of peas. I used a bit of newspaper to take mine because the stuff was too hot to hold in my bare hand. I received a mighty portion, sat down on a rusty sheet of iron, and greedily, looking at no one, crammed the steaming mess into my mouth.

After supper I went up to the loft and without thought or

feeling in my head I put my head on my handbag and fell into a heavy sleep.

Early next morning I woke shivering and with an aching neck. I was cold, though I had slept fully dressed and in an overcoat. Hereabouts the nights were very cold, though the days were all the hotter. My bed-fellows were nearly all on the move. The loft had a door towards the yard, and here were light and fresh air. This part of the room was crowded with men shaving or doing their toilet.

We three woke up and stared. So there we were, on a thin layer of straw on a cold floor, among a crowd of foul-mouthed tramps.

We craved above all for fresh water. The only pump was at the end of the yard, and here we had to queue up and to take our turn at washing. We had to queue up, too, for the only closet. It took us three hours to finish these two operations. But we had time enough.

About nine o'clock the sun was shining hotly into the yard. Everyone was outside, and there was scarcely room to move. The majority of the men were German or Austrian workmen, but not of the better sort. There was a fair sprinkling of Tirolese labourers among them. They did not make the most favourable of impressions at first sight. Later we formed a more detailed judgement. The big trunk which I noticed on Périgueux station proved, as I thought, to belong to a Hungarian. I met the owner at the pump; he was a pleasant young fellow from the Bácska who had been learning flying at Blériot's school in Paris. His name was Emil Dudás, and he had come to Paris from Zenta. He said he had some friends there: one of them, Fenyvesi, was an engineer who for years had been working in a factory in Paris, and the other was a lawyer who had meant to spend only a few days in Paris on his way to America.

I was mightily relieved to find some countrymen. Besides these last there was a Hungarian peasant called Mihály with us who had been transplanted by Barnum straight from the

Hungarian great Plain into the international life of the circus, as a cowboy turn. When he became too heavy for that he had turned furniture-remover's man.

In the next few days we discovered two other Hungarians. One was Boromissza, a cabinet-maker who had worked for thirty years in Neuilly. He had lived there with a French-woman by whom he already had eleven illegitimate children. Just before the war broke out he meant to marry her, since she displayed such aptitude for wifely functions, but the lovers' union was hindered by the great upheaval. So Boromissza counted as unmarried, and as such was assigned to our detachment. He mixed his Hungarian plentifully with French words.

The other discovery could speak even less. His parents were Hungarian, but he himself was born in Paris and had gone to a French school. We never discovered his exact name. As he spoke French perfectly he was soon detailed for work in the office of the Administrator, where help was needed.

About ten o'clock the Administrator forced his way through the dense crowd of internees in the yard. He arrived on a bicycle, and he wore a bicycling-cap and his trousers held in nickel clips. We did not like the look of him. From under a perpetually frowning forehead little beady eyes looked suspiciously right and left as though he were afraid the *canaille* through which he was forging his way would one of these days set upon him and choke the life out of him. It was easy to see his relief when he reached the door of the storehouse. Here the Alsatian clerk and the Jew waiter who could no longer speak Hungarian were in attendance. The Alsatian had permission to live in Périgueux, and he only came in for his work, while the waiter was free to come and go and was in charge of the catering for the two other internment camps in the town as well as our own.

We learnt all that days later. It appeared that the Administrator did not occupy himself personally with our affairs,

but had only the feeding to arrange, and he only came to the Dépôt Laës because provisions for all three camps were in the cellar there. We were not allowed near the office or storehouse. In the beginning the only privileged man among us was an unpleasant-looking German who called himself a sculptor. For understandable reasons he fell in love with the Administrator's pock-marked, bony countenance and expressed an ardent desire to immortalise it in marble. I do not know how he arranged matters with his Muse on the score of this outrage, but to us he became from that moment more detestable than before. Moreover there was something about him that the French call *louche*. His face was like a mask, and his moustache looked as if it had been stuck on to his shiny countenance. His big spectacles were his shield behind which he took pains to hide, and behind the glass his magnified eyes swelled and flickered and pretended to vanish like a dying flame. His cringing cunning first became apparent to us from the fact that he spoke French, though with an excruciating accent, even with his compatriots. No one had much faith in him, though he was always trying to demonstrate with his photographs what a fine studio, elegant customers and colossal conceptions of sculpture he had.

One day he finished his statue of the Administrator, and the same day he received permission to take rooms in the town. In all my internment that was the only man of whom I thought it possible that he had been a spy before the War.

Especially during the first few days the official and unofficial hatred of which we had been given such startling evidence at the railway station demonstrated itself, if possible, even more strongly. Quite apart from the usual Boche-hatred, they seemed to suspect a spy in every one of us. Of evenings the town mob collected round the Dépôt Laës and amused itself cursing and abusing us and throwing stones at the building. A high iron gate shut the yard off from the street; there was a sentry outside and the guard-room was just inside; so we were well enough guarded. But there were

always rumours on foot that the inhabitants of Périgueux were going to lay siege to the Dépôt and tear us all to pieces. Those rumours, however, may have been spread by the authorities to discourage any longings for escape.

As for ourselves, we felt no hatred for the French. The Germans even made a collection for the French wounded, though the rest of us disapproved of the gesture as being too servile. The local papers heard of it, however, and stopped calling us spies.

Périgueux, though we did not know it, was only the beginning of the beginning. If we had had the slightest idea that we were to stay under those conditions for five years we should have gone mad or committed suicide. For the moment all our thoughts were bent on sending news home, with obtaining help somehow, from somewhere, from the Austro-Hungarian Embassy of some neutral state, on killing the time from morning till evening.

Naturally, at first we lived in a ghastly confusion, as though we had come into the world grown-up and had been left to ourselves to live as best we could. We wanted to live, but it was difficult to find where to begin.

It was in connection with eating, washing and the other physical necessities that the greatest headlessness reigned. The first man who managed to put some order into our new lives earned high authority. A kindly, blue-eyed Prussian workman with greying hair and whiskers took on himself the initiative. He was in civil life a tanner, but he must have seen long military service, for he appeared to know all about the needs and the organisation of crowd life.

The Prussian first of all obtained buckets and ladles from the Administrator. He divided the men into groups and assigned a "server" to each group. These waiters brought the groups their food, which at midday consisted of beef-and-soup and in the evening of some vegetable. We never had any complaints to make about the food at Périgueux; the bread was good and there was plenty of it; supplementary

food was to be had cheaply. I remember that those who were lucky enough to have money could buy a litre of wine for forty or fifty centimes and for ten centimes as many pears and apples as one could eat. The soldiers lived better than we did. One of them, a brown-skinned, friendly fellow, once in a fit of compassion gave me a whole portion of his meal. It was delicious, and there was enough of it for several of us to make a feast off the stuff.

The whiskery Prussian earned great prestige among the men, and was nicknamed the Colonel. The Colonel managed, through the cook, to approach the Administrator. He gradually took over the catering for the meals, for it was easier to discuss matters with him than with the old cook, who could neither read nor write. Eventually the Colonel persuaded the Administrator to turn out the cook and give the work to an unpaid waiter. The Administrator gave orders that the quarrelsome old crone was to give up coming to the Dépôt Laës. But the order was not as simple in its execution as all that, for the raging old hag hacked her way into the yard and set up a fearful screaming when the soldiers, bayonets and all, came to drag her out again.

She still went on cursing and screaming out in the street when the soldiers had once succeeded in planting her there.

'The bigger thieves' turn will come soon,' she shrieked, in unmistakable reference to the Administrator, and, a crowd gathering round her, she explained with vivid gesture what had happened and expressed her conviction that the Administrator was in the pay of the Boches.

The removal of the cook increased the Colonel's popularity even more. He shared it with one or two companions whom he had chosen to help him in the distribution of food. One of them was a red-moustached, spectacled, hunchbacked little man who in civil life was a tanner. He won his popularity through once giving a much stronger Tirolese workman such a beating with his ladle that the fellow went running to the guard for help. The Tirolese was always complaining that

the hunchback gave him the worst helpings because on account of his poverty he could not bribe him. One day the Tirolese threw a very bony lump of meat at the hunchback's head. The lump must have been really bony, for it made a mighty whack against the red-haired dwarf's forehead. And at that the dwarf went for the Tirolese with his ladle and beat him black and blue. It was then the hunchback received the nickname of "Capitaine." He was a cheerful fellow, for all his misfortune.

The other popular "server" was the Captain's best friend. His name was Otto. He was knock-kneed, rabbit-faced, weedy-moustached and was a wizard of humour. It was said that in peace-time he filled the position of hall-porter in one of the lesser hotels. It could not have been one of the best, to judge from the awkwardness of his figure and the little he knew about languages. In the evenings, when everyone was lying in the straw, he used to tell funny stories or tell us all about village life and the joys of doing nothing. There was not a single domestic animal that he could not imitate. He usually began with the dawn: the lazy, jerky twittering of waking birds: then the stir in the poultry-yard, the little chickens' peeping, the old cock's victoriously husky crowing, the lowing of cows from the stable, the pig snuffing down his empty trough and grunting in disappointment.

When he had woken the animals Otto took us into the cottage room, where the old couple, the grown-up sons and daughters and the little children were getting up. He imitated the waking grunts and moans of each of them, their first words or first wail. Then he took us out into the fields, sending the geese flying before us as we went. The fat fowls would rise with a tremendous flapping and squawking, only to come down again immediately and discuss the matter with jerky, indignant gobblings till they hustled each other into the green of the horse-pond. Otto rendered it all with no aid to his voice. He had a throat like a conjuror's hat. He could produce a whole menagerie out of it, and for any-

thing quite beyond its capabilities he helped himself out by banging bits of sheet-iron, laths or bits of glass in a perfect frenzy of anticipatory jazz.

The loft of No. 2 sometimes echoed with laughter late at night, to the envy of the other rooms. Otto generally ended his programme with the cat's wooing. His great triumph was when in response to his lovesick wails a real cat in search of adventure appeared at the loft window, its green eyes blazing with lust, two holes of light punched in the blind darkness. It was Otto's greatest but at the same time last success.

For the next day something happened to him that robbed him of all inclination to joke for a long time. The red-haired waiter, who had made great friends with him, wheedled permission for Otto, on the pretext of helping him, to go also into the town. It was Sunday. Already in the morning Otto had put on a long, shiny frock-coat, a dazzling white waistcoat and a bowler hat and was marching up and down in the yard saluting everyone with exaggerated courtesy. In the afternoon the red-haired waiter and a waggoner came to fetch him, and he disappeared in wildly high spirits. In the evening he arrived, somewhat tipsy and with his head bandaged up. After that he lived absolutely apart and nearly without speaking to anyone. He never told anyone what had happened.

The Colonel did his best to extend his influence to matters of sanitation as far as was possible in that hopelessly unsuitable warehouse and with the crowd of tramps and down-at-heels who were shut up with us. For instance, it cost a great struggle to stop such of them as actually brought themselves to wash their clothes from using for that purpose the buckets from which the soup was dispensed. Others had actually to be forced to take off their clothes and underclothes once a week and wash themselves at the pump.

When these primary matters were settled somehow or other our routine began to be established. For the first few days we were restless and spent the whole time wandering uneasily

up to the loft and down again to the yard, thinking it impossible that we should have to remain twenty-four hours in the same situation and expecting every moment to bring a change, good or bad. After a week we began to settle down. Books and old newspapers appeared, for we were not allowed to read the daily papers. I began to translate Regnier's *Les Vacances d'un jeune homme sage*, which came into my hands in serial form. That gave me occupation for a couple of weeks. At the beginning of the second week a chess set made its appearance, moulded out of bread by a Polish sculptor.

Everyone was bent on securing for himself a comparatively peaceful corner, for the dreadful crowding made all privacy impossible.

Towards evening life quickened in the corner where the stove was. The Colonel had procured a long table and had obtained the right for himself and the two cooks to sell grog at two sous and a piece of bread at one sou. There was a bench for his customers. I was then still without money, and I contemplated the grog-drinkers with much the same envious awe as that with which I had once watched the visitors to the Café de la Paix in Paris, of which someone had told me in the days when I was new to Paris that only millionaires could go there for *consommations*.

'*Zum Mittagessen!*' The call resounded through the yard and rooms. The Colonel banged loudly with a wooden spoon on a sheet of iron. That was the gong.

My table was at the back of the long-shaped yard, and was next to the workshop. The Captain had made it out of bits of iron. Barrels and piled-up stones served as chairs. We had altogether achieved great order. Everyone had a place of his own, and everyone respected the others' stones and barrels.

I was not particularly satisfied with the place that was allotted to me. One of my neighbours was a fat, whiskered

Tirolese mason, who had never taken off his winter suit, which was thick and green and ornamented with boars' tusks. Everything he wore made one think of how a fox smells, and moreover he had the habit of coughing or sneezing loudly during his meals without turning his face away or putting a handkerchief to his mouth. At the beginning of our acquaintance it often happened that just when I felt particularly hungry this Tirolese stinker sneezed straight into my soup. Such fatal clearing of his pipes meant a whole day's fasting for me, for it was impossible to eat what was given us in the evening, and I had no money with which to buy myself bread or fruit. So I took to keeping an eye on my soup, and as long as I was eating fenced myself off from the green-waist-coated gentleman with my left arm. My other neighbour was the sad-eyed Italian Tirolese whom the Captain had beaten so soundly. Unfortunately he could not be said to smell sweetly, and it is therefore conceivable that I was in constant perplexity finding a place for my nose where it could dodge this double smell-barrage.

We had the so-called Francophile at our table and several other quiet Germans who were also Francophiles. These last were really only Germans on paper, and one young fellow could hardly speak German at all. Later, some of them also became French soldiers.

But of all my table companions the most interesting was Monsieur Jacques, a red-haired Bukovinan horse-coper, probably a Jew, whose mother tongue was Rumanian, probably. I say probably, because we never heard him talk anything but French. He had a good enough accent, but the conversation that proceeded at table between him and a large crowd of courtiers could not have been called classical.

The Bukovinan horse-coper was a curiously bloated figure. He was more like a weaver's shuttle than anything else. His head was very narrow at the top; then his freckled, flabby cheeks began to swell, his neck, fiery red and furrowed with wrinkles, looked as if it would burst, and his shoulders and

above all his belly took on colossal proportions, which gradually were reduced from his thighs downwards to his thin shanks and his tiny feet, the weight-carrying capacity of which amounted to a wonder. When he fed, he puffed and panted and gasped; he despised the common fare, drank wine every day, afterwards black coffee, consumed a vast quantity of dessert, and finally produced a large cigar, and, after kneading it all over, lit it with a fat, sensuous expression of pleasure. Only then did the first smile grace his lips.

I need hardly say that Monsieur Jacques (I learnt later that his name was Jacob Berger) was very rich. His courtiers, who ate with him and conversed in French for his pleasure, received a fixed daily payment from him, in return for which they had to perform various duties. One had to do his master's daily fatigues, another was his personal servant and had to clean his shoes and clothes, wrangle for water for his basin and every morning wash and groom him as though he were a big, blown-out cart-horse. A third shaved him. A fourth and fifth stole straw for him from other men's places. And there were still others. Here it was I first noticed a young Austrian bank clerk, who owed it to his poverty that he formed part of Monsieur Jacques' court. I was that bank clerk's neighbour in imprisonment for five years, and I think he never ceased to look at me a little suspiciously, wondering whether I really had noticed him at that pitch of debasement. I never betrayed that I remembered. For I myself could look on enviously when Monsieur Jacques regaled his court with black coffee after their meal, or in a fit of generosity stuck two-sous cigars into their mouths. If I had been practical enough I would have enrolled myself as his reader or letter-writer for the sake of those cigars. But Monsieur Jacques had probably little need of such things, and at the best I should not long have had opportunity, for on the fifteenth day of his time in Périgueux there came a change.

It began with straw-stealing. Monsieur Jacques slept in the loft, and he had given two of his lackeys a standing order

to steal straw from the other men during the daytime, when it would not be noticed, and pile it on his own place. So while under some of us the straw became dirtier and thinner till in places the floor showed through, on the red-haired Bukovinan's lying-place it grew steadily thicker and thicker. At last there was a rebellion, and under Otto's leadership the men one night pulled that swollen couch to pieces while they enveloped Monsieur Jacques in a blanket and thrashed him in it soundly.

Next day the whole of the Dépôt Laës was discussing the affair, with no little satisfaction that Monsieur had been so soundly paid out. But the cunning horse-coper was apparently quite unconcerned, talking cheerfully enough with his courtiers after the meal and even treating them all to a double black coffee and forcing cigars on all and sundry. But something was brewing, for he watched Otto ceaselessly.

That evening it became clear what his plan was. He arranged to have an encounter with Otto just at the time when the Administrator was passing through the yard on his evening visit. A lively dispute arose, other men gathered round, and soon a clean-shaven, knickerbockered Prussian, called Bismarck because he was always arguing about the War very learnedly, took up the cudgels. The Bukovinan watched until the Administrator was quite near, and then suddenly began shouting in pretended anger, his face red as fire:

'Vous m'insultez parce que je suis francophile. Eh bien oui, je suis francophile, je suis francophile!'

'Tu es un salopris, un sale joupin!' retorted Bismarck, and accentuated his remarks with a swinging smack in the face of Monsieur Jacques.

That of course drew a crowd, there was a scuffle, and the Administrator arrived just in time to save the Bukovinan from the hands of those who had attacked him for daring to say he was—a Francophile.

The next day Monsieur Jacques was given permission to live in the town. There was an end to the coffee and cigars,

to the great mortification of the court. But I was glad, for I took possession of the empty place and so escaped my sneezing neighbour. I effected the appropriation with all due humility and without demonstration, as was fitting.

It was the end of August. There was still no change. Our straw had gone to dust under us, and no fresh straw came. No one thought of providing tables and benches. It could not last long like that.

We gathered that all was not well on the battlefield from the heavier and heavier showers of stones rattling on the roof of the Dépôt Laës of evenings. News filtered through to us that French civil refugees had arrived at Périgueux. Newspapers we could only read by stealth. We knew of the fall of Brussels and Namur, and we even felt the effects of the panic French retreat after the battle of Charleroi. We could only sense that the Germans were threatening Paris, but we knew it surely.

In such an atmosphere the arrival at the Dépôt of the police *commissaire*, and his summons to us to assemble because he had something important to announce, caused enormous excitement.

I had not seen the official since the first day. Now he wore no tail-coat but a blue suit and a short jacket. He wiped the sweat from his skull where the scanty grey hair clung damply. His nose showed every variety of alcoholic pinks and purples. He stood on the two steps leading to the lower dormitory as if on a platform, and to the assembly before him, in deathly silence, spoke thus:

‘I have been reading the letters you write, for I know German. I must confess that sometimes tears have come into my eyes while I was reading. But now I have come across two German letters the writers of which complain that they are being starved and brutally ill-treated here. That is monstrous. I can only pray God that our own “children”

have as good a time of it down there'—he made a theatrical gesture towards the East—'as you have here. I warn you that if after this anyone writes such a letter of complaint I will simply have him put in cells.'

Thus spake the police *commissaire*. Not the all-important, life-ordering announcement we had been expecting, but it made an impression on us, of a sort. Some men broke out in remonstrance:

'Tell us their names. We'll deal with them. What is true is true. We don't starve here.'

The police *commissaire* spread wide his hands:

'This time I shall not do so. But the next time everybody had better look out for himself.'

He departed, and we discussed the affair. Only Bismarck, who had become positively morose ever since the Bukovinan horse-coper had used him as a spring-board to freedom, was not to be taken in, and remarked with a grin:

'Do you believe that old liar? Yesterday he made exactly the same speech in the other depot. The whole thing is only a trick to keep people from complaining. Why, just as he was going I shouted to him in German that he was a swine—and he didn't even turn his head. That's his knowing German. . . .'

We listened to the undeceiver open-mouthed. This Bismarck must have been a spy in civil life! Anyway, there must be one spy among us.

That evening I was included among the guests of the Dépôt Laës Café de la Paix. The Embassy in Berne sent me forty francs, and Németh received the same amount, so we invited our countrymen to an evening of coffee and wine.

The most interesting among them was the Budapest lawyer. He was clean-shaven and very blond and very well dressed. In Paris at mobilisation time he had been made to produce

his identification papers about once every ten minutes, till at last he found it best simply to stay indoors till the day when he should be interned, since he could not move about the streets in any case. He fled from his present filthy surroundings to the preservation of his elegance, and enveloped himself in fine things to wear and fine perfumes to smell. His life at home had collapsed, and he had been on his way to America when the War broke out; that venture had failed, but he profited from the situation to learn a deal of English words, walking up and down the yard all day mumbling them to himself.

He had come to Budapest from Upper Hungary, and it was always of Upper Hungary he told us in our story-telling gatherings of evenings, of Upper Hungary and the queer, crazy world there, the raking, serenading cavaliers and the pretty girls.

Then there was Dudás, who had been a pupil of Blériot in Paris and had not spent more than a few months in that city before the War broke out. He represented the Bácska, and had plenty to tell about it. His father was mayor of Zenta, his mother came of Serbian stock. Dudás' name had been in the papers while he was still at school. He had shot at one of his schoolfellows, perhaps even killed him. That dark secret grew on and round him during his time of imprisonment. He arrived in internment with a fair stock of money and his mighty travelling trunk filled with a great store of suits and linen.

With those two came Fenyvesi the engineer, a modest little man. He took off his stiff collar in Périgueux and never put it on again for years. When on some supremely important occasion he actually did put it on again, he was perfectly unrecognisable. He was short, almost squat. He hid a bald head by combing his black side-hair over the baldness. He had a little toothbrush moustache which he pulled and tweaked when he was thinking or anxious. He had plenty of opportunity to indulge in this trick. He spoke French perfectly,

was very fond of argument, and had a favourite phrase: "*D'un point c'est tout!*"

The two schoolmasters, Németh and Soltész, completed our little society; but to-night we had two other Hungarians as guests, Mihály the furniture-remover and the cabinet-maker Boromissza.

Mihály was still genuinely Hungarian in spite of his international career. The way he wiped his cocky moustache after emptying his glass brought back all the world of the Plain he had left. His figure loomed bigger and bulkier in the falling darkness, his every movement had something symbolical in it. He could not bear imprisonment, stretching out his great, muscly arms, longing for freedom. He would have liked to have been a Hussar again and fight the Serbs. But he hated the Germans just as much as he hated the Serbs. Should he enlist in the Foreign Legion or attempt to escape to Spain? It all tormented him—or rather, disturbed him much as flea-bites would—more physically than spiritually.

Next to Mihály's brown face, black, twisted moustache under hooked nose, tough, muscled frame, the white flabbiness of Boromissza had something of the Slav indolence.

That evening Boromissza's tongue was loosed and he told us how he had been snared by the French woman by whom he had already had eleven illegitimate children. He of course did not realise he had been snared, for he knew practically nothing about anything. He planed and bored and chiselled and made furniture and coffins, and in the meantime his rabbits multiplied (for he was a great rabbit-fancier) much as his children multiplied. He came into imprisonment with great, open sores all over his body. He used to bind them up every morning with grimy rags. I regarded him with some horror, for he slept not far from me, and it was easy to see that the sores were of venereal origin.

The time passed quickly. Fritz Labes, sick Rudi's friend, finished a little concert he was giving in the yard, and the

men went to bed. Only we Hungarians were left outside, sitting quietly or occasionally talking in low voices.

With a sigh and a shiver Mihály got up from the ground. His shirt-sleeves gleamed white in the moonlight. Then the rest of us followed him and set off slowly for the stair leading to the loft, where the floor creaked from the weight of many men's bodies and the air was heavy with their breaths.

A few steps from the door a French soldier was standing. The moonlight flashed on his shouldered rifle and bayonet. We stopped by him in hesitation, for it looked as though he wanted to take us to the guard-room. But, looking nearer, we saw that his cap was knocked over one eye, and his whole position, for all its drilled stiffness, was struggling with a great swaying such as the weight of alcohol may cause in a body.

Just as we were passing him, with a sudden movement he caught Dudás' arm and shouted in his ear:

'They ought to hang your Kaiser William!' Then he pushed the aeronaut away from him, looked at him slyly as if to judge the effect of his pronouncement, pulled him back, lifted a forefinger to command attention and said, now only in a whisper:

'... and for all I care you can string up our bloody old President beside him!'

In the first days after our arrival, relying on the famous placards promising us transport to a neutral state, we addressed a petition to the Prefect of the Dordogne that the promise should be fulfilled. The answer arrived at the beginning of September. The authorities were not in a position to comply with our request.

We did not feel the clouds to be gathering over our heads. Our fate depended on events, not on the Prefect of the Dordogne, and we watched events. Resistance on the French side was becoming more stubborn. The Government had retreated from Paris to Bordeaux.

Then we had the death of Pius X and the succession of Benedict XV with which to occupy our thoughts, and we waited for the new Pope to seek out the chiefs of the warring nations and summon them to cease the bloodshed. That we conceived to be his moral duty.

We could talk all this out only within our own particular little society, for among all the rest there was hardly one with whom it was possible to hold sensible speech.

On the whole in the Dépôt Laës there had not yet been developed that conception of the *interné civil* that caused such individuals to be treated like criminals and presented to French militarism as fit material for carrying on the game of retaliation, that cruel *jeu de représailles* that was played with Germany.

For the moment we were all dubbed *indésirables*. We could not appreciate the various processes of selection going on among us, but our only means of deducing that the German battering-ram could deal no decisive blow on the French defence was the fact that the luring of interned men into the Foreign Legion began again. The War must be going to last, if it was worth while to begin recruiting again. At least the French must be thinking so, for we ourselves still did not believe that it could continue more than another two or three months. I know of several cases of men having enlisted in the Legion because their contract was good for the duration of the War and they were convinced that the War would be over before their preliminary training was finished. The wretches were out in their reckoning, though it is true that they did not stay long in the Legion, for they were nearly all sent to places where they quickly died.

There were two decenter-looking Germans whom I must mention. One was a tall, thin, brown-bearded, commercial-looking man who never talked to anyone. He used to sit and read all day at the door of the loft which opened on the yard and had a little projecting roof. The place was the loft's eye, and from that opening we obtained light and air. If anyone had shut it one evening I should have stifled.

Hardly anyone stayed in the loft by day, and it was left to the mysterious German. He once lent me a book, and then took to lending me and Németh books regularly, or such newspapers as he obtained by smuggling. Once Németh passed on one of the lent books to Bismarck, though they were lent only on the understanding that we should give them to no one. The German made no fuss about it, but simply never lent us anything more and cut off all communication with us, returning to his books alone.

The other better-looking German was not so pleasant. He had a thick black beard and a preference for the company of young German waiters. He gave himself out to be a great German, but that did not mean much. There was something suspicious in his manner, though I could not exactly say what. As one feels of clothes that have hung for a long time in the attic, so one felt of him that he had been a long time in prison.

There was an extraordinary proportion of Tirolese masons among us, some of them Italians, some even a sort of gypsy nationality speaking the Tirolese German dialect. They were very dirty and very smelly and spent their days with a fiddle under their chins. The battered instruments on which they strummed were still spotted with mortar in witness of their trade being more building than music-making.

Besides the Hungarians the Poles were the only ones with whom we could converse on more friendly terms. Three Polish artists had found their way into our dépôt, and had found two compatriots of theirs already of the company. Their little society had built itself a day-home against the vine-grown wall of the workshop out of the material that littered the yard, making a screen of the sheets of iron to shut out the view of the restless commotion in the yard. On the other side they looked at the pump, where few men lingered during the day.

I often went to sit with the Poles. We talked and they drew while I stared at the stone wall or listened to the splash

of water being pumped. But that was not my chief pastime. Over the wall to the left I could see a corner of the next-door house's garden balcony. A little girl some eight or ten years old used to come and play there in the afternoons among the pot-flowers, in the shade of a bright-leaved creeper. She dressed her dolls or looked at her picture-books or cut out things with scissors. After some days she took to greeting me with a nod and sometimes smiled at me. It was not her show of friendliness that was the important thing so much as the fact of her presence.

Rucki was the most talented of the Polish artists. Both as an artist and as a man he had lived till then a questing, tormented life in Paris, and he still bore the traces of it in his nervous gestures, the way in which his words tumbled over one another and in his restless eyes. Returecki, the other painter, was the exact opposite. He sat all day drawing or staring in front of himself, and meanwhile his hair and beard grew and grew till it looked as though they would grow into the ground. He had a very Egyptian profile. Of the three artists he was the most immature and the youngest. The third, Stornski, had studied sculpture in Paris. He did not at all look the artist's part. His short-cropped red hair, spectacles and knickerbockers made him look much like a German commercial traveller. He was more taciturn than the others, but he spoke German better than they did. Returecki only spoke a few words of German, and these he set together so slowly that an exchange of ideas with him lasted hours. Rucki spoke every possible language, even a little Hungarian, faultily but very fast.

Now it was not very fair of the French authorities to take advantage of our situation to try to persuade us to join the Foreign Legion. They could have known we were above all oppressed by the mole-life we were living. While every man worth anything had either with loathing or enthusiasm offered

his life to the ideals of war, we were forced to huddle into a filthy refuge like rats on the remains of a sinking ship.

Their action is nevertheless understandable, for they had the French capacity for believing their own affairs to be the sacred cause of all humanity. So came the enlistment of Alsatians and Germans and the minorities of the Double Monarchy. What happened to the men who joined I do not know, but there came back dreadful tales to us.

But there came a French Alsatian priest, who stood on the platform from which the police *commissaire* had pronounced his carefully concocted lies, and preached to us betrayal of our countries. It is really no business of a priest to go recruiting.

I watched the faces of some of the men in whom a pre-War adoration of France still lived. After the priest had finished declaiming a sheet of paper was handed round for those to sign who wanted to join the Legion. Many of us signed merely because we wanted the chance of a walk round the town and to see how the enrolment was done; or because we were determined to hold back the others.

The march into the town took place next day. We went in column of fours. Two soldiers without rifles went with us. We went along the road that a month before we had walked from the station. Now the streets were lifeless; one or two sun-scorched old women stood by the side of the street and stared after us, or a blue-smocked child ran alongside us.

The enrolment was carried out at the barracks. In the barrack-yard and in the neighbouring gardens wounded soldiers with bandaged arms or on crutches were sitting or walking up and down. They stared at us with lifeless faces.

Of the Hungarians Mihály alone went before the commission. We called him back at the last moment and tried to persuade him not to go. He went heavy-footed, but he went all the same. He never said so, but it was probably on account of some French girl. He was of course received with delight. Among the others taken was a handsome German

waiter, who went because of a French lover, and the sad-eyed Tirolese Italian, who went because he had not had a full meal since the day of his internment.

They left the Dépôt Laës the next day. No one cursed them, and no one said good-bye to them.

Our conjecture that our situation in Périgueux must be only temporary at last proved right.

Days later we were officially informed that we were to prepare to move. By now we knew what travel in cattle-trucks implied, and everyone prepared himself accordingly.

On October 3 in the early morning we were drawn up in fours in the yard of the Dépôt Laës. From the calling of the roll it appeared that the volunteers were not by any means the only ones to be left in Périgueux. Among those to stay was the Alsatian clerk, the red-haired Hungarian waiter and several others of the favoured, mostly German Alsations with French relations. The bearded, silent German who had once given us books to read was also to stay behind. It appeared he had two sons in the French army. He gave me a book as he said good-bye, remarking with a smile that I could lend it as much as I liked.

There was great excitement when suddenly out of the grey dawn a figure appeared which we had not seen for a long time; the German sculptor, brought by two French soldiers from the town. So that wonderful statue of the Administrator had only assured him exemption for a short time! He was a pitiable sight. He rubbed his red eyes with his knuckles as though to dispel a bad dream. His shoes were not laced, and he was carrying his tie and collar in his hand. Apparently he had not been given much time to dress.

Bismarck of the bicycling-cap noticed the German sculptor's arrival with cheerful satisfaction. From the way he tugged at his coat-sleeves and spat on his hands there seemed to be trouble brewing; but for the moment he con-

trolled himself. He remembered how he had smacked the Bukovinan's face and how the latter had profited from it; but they had not brought him back as they had the German sculptor.

At six o'clock, with his usual puffing, vain, drunkard's face the police *commissaire* arrived. He gave a few last orders. Then came the command to move off quickly and without noise. Apparently they wanted to avoid demonstrations. But there was no need for precautions. While we silently hurried through the streets the only things we met were a few cats. The town was still asleep, and we went as though fleeing, stealing secretly away before it should wake. But whither, none of us knew.

CHAPTER III

THE ISLAND PRISON

WE travelled a day and a night and still we had no idea of where they were taking us. We passed Libourne and Bordeaux, and then of a sudden turned north-west, and there-with the hope of the Spanish frontier vanished. Though we now only dreamed that we should be put over the frontier of a neutral state according to the promise given us.

But, then, where were we going and why the great secrecy? We were taken as though we were convicts, crowded into cattle-trucks with two gendarmes in the opening of each sliding door. The unmarried men from the other two Périgueux internment camps had been joined to us. They were about the same in number as we ourselves. Altogether there must have been some two hundred and forty of us. But as yet we could see nothing of the others, for we were hustled straight into the trucks at Périgueux and since then, though the train had spent a deal of time in sidings, we were not allowed out of our own trucks. The two gendarmes blocked the view through the door in surly silence. Once one of us ventured to ask where we were going. The uniformed sphinx ignored the question.

After twenty-four hours' travelling and delays we completely lost our sense of direction. For all we knew we might have been going round in circles. At last, in the morning of October 4, someone from behind the gendarmes' backs caught a glimpse of the name of one of the bigger stations—La Roches-sur-Yon. We looked it up on the map in secret. We found we had not come such a very great distance. Clearly we had made a big detour.

further march became a mighty, forbidding fortress ringed round with walls and a moat.

We had arrived at Noirmoutier.

It seemed the civil and military authorities of the Dordogne and the Vendée had come to some agreement. In Noirmoutier we were received with exactly the same lack of preparation as in Périgueux. There our quarters had been temporary, but there was nothing temporary about these thick walls.

We were received at the gate of the fort by a white-trousered, blue-coated naval officer, governor of the island, and a purple-faced, barrel-fat man in huge clogs—the mayor of the community. We tramped over the one-time drawbridge.

A big, weed-grown, grass-grown yard. On all four sides great walls, crumbling here and there. To the right a one-storied house and a little lean-to building against the wall. To the left another low, half-ruined building. And straight ahead, shouldered by four towers, huge, battered, grey-brown walls pierced by rare and narrow windows.

The main fortress, or by its French name the *donjon*.

‘Here you will be safe, and—for a long time,’ said the naval officer when we were halted in a half-circle in front of him. ‘You must not be under any illusions. The War is going to last a long time. Perhaps even for another six months. You cannot escape from here. So take cover and wait till the storm is over.’

The words rang cruelly, though he did not speak in hatred. Their very matter-of-factness emphasised the truth of what they said. And we never saw that honest officer again. It was said he resigned in disgust when he saw how the civil authorities provided for us.

The soldiers went off to the smaller building and sent us to the keep. The Germans went first. They were allotted two big rooms on the first story. Then we came. We were crowded into four bare rooms on the first and second stories, forty or fifty of us into each room.

The guard, still equipped with his revolver, placed me next to Boromissza. He could not understand why I should not want to be next to the unfortunate Hungarian cabinet-maker with his open, bloody sores. . . . Each man received a space eighty centimetres wide and a hundred and eighty long. In the middle there was a gangway fenced off by low boards.

I threw my handbag on the shelf and went off with several others to look for water with which to wash and to examine our new lodging.

From *chambrée* No. 6 (the room where we were was named as in barracks) we had to go into and across a corner of No. 5 to reach a little room whence by an ancient, creaky, winding stairway we came down into a biggish sort of anteroom. Out of this opened the other four rooms. And from here was the way out into the little tower court of the keep, the wall round which was formed on three sides by the upper story of the keep building. A stone staircase led from here down into the main yard. At the bottom of the stone stairs, to the right, we found the kitchen, with a gush of smell of vegetable soup coming out of it.

The yard was big and quiet. In front of the face of the keep was a towering, knotty old poplar tree under which we lay down full length in the grass. To be alone you had only to lie low in one of the corners and recesses along the wall. The guard was quartered down by the gate, and was therefore not so eternally under our noses as in Périgueux.

But our first concern was for the most elementary needs. It did not take us long to convince ourselves that in this respect our situation was desperate. Water for drinking and washing had to be brought barrel-wise to the fort. Washing water could be drawn from the well in front of the fortress, but for drinking water we had to go out to a pump about a quarter of an hour's walk away. Of latrines there was again only one: a hole broken in the stone flooring somewhere. This time it was for two hundred and forty men, and almost ten minutes from the keep. Of benches or tables there was no

trace. But at least plates and spoons for the *soupe* were served out.

Someone of our company who had been a soldier had learnt the French bugle-calls. He trumpeted us to our first soup in Noirmoutier—a ration of thin potato soup and a chunk of bread. We learnt that besides this we should receive beef only twice a week—and “remains” at that—and for the rest it would be vegetable soup morning, noon and night. In the morning we were given black coffee.

However, we were not much concerned with food the first evening. We went all over the yard and its walls, climbed up onto the roof of the keep, which was flat, and from the terrace-like top of one of the towers we looked right out to the sea, the sandy fields, the salt-flats and the wood which spread over the western side of the island.

Everything in the fortress was ancient and dilapidated. The locks creaked and were red with rust. The doors and windows would not shut. There were finger-thick cracks in the floor, through which all the rubbish of the room above fell down into the lower room. Out of some of the rooms there opened little, round, enormously high tower-rooms, and in these the damp mould was trickling down the walls.

It was said that Noirmoutier was founded by Saint Philibert in the early Middle Ages. Since then the castle—the French name of which means Black Monastery—had undergone various alterations. Its present state dated from the fifteenth century. Outside the walls was the church, and there was supposed to be a secret passage to it from the fortress. The keep or main building was not used for anything. At one time there had been some sort of a Fire Brigade Museum in it. It had last been occupied by German-Austrian prisoners in 1870–71. We followed in their footsteps nearly half a century later.

We were told all this by a curly-haired greybeard whose name was Mignale and who as innkeeper had obtained the right to run a canteen in the fortress. That first evening he

had cooked sea-snails and chicken hash to sell us for two sous. For five or six sous a litre of wine was to be had from him. Everything was remarkably cheap in that district.

We had still a few francs left from the help we had received from the Embassy at Berne. So we appeased the hunger our march had given us with food bought at the canteen, eating it lying in the grass, though Monsieur Mignale promised to have a table by the next day, and even chairs, and to arrange for a special room for the canteen.

The evening gathered slowly. The fort's square of walls grew paler and more luminous, the façade of the keep cut a sharp line against the blue velvet of the sky. Stars lit up and a clouded moon shone out.

Everything here was so strange. The figures of the other men were only shadows now, though the fort wall and the keep were as though stirring with life. It was as though the silver-gleaming building's high cliffy wall, against which the bats, like storm-blown sooty particles, flew and cross-flew on ghostly wings, had silently stepped forward.

We Hungarians were talking under the poplar tree—the other schoolmasters, the Budapest lawyer, the aviator, the engineer and the cabinet-maker. Then our number began to grow. One after another the Hungarians from the other two Périgueux camps were joining us, unknown faces emerging from the dusk and joining our circle.

A thin, fair-haired, knickerbockered young man appeared. He introduced himself. He was Zsiga Nagy, a ladies' tailor from Paris. Then came the two Feldenczer brothers, one of them hardly sixteen years old and both workers in a tanner's yard in Paris.

A bald-headed, spectacled, green-aproned man hurried up gesticulating vividly. He might be fifty or fifty-five. His name was Müller. He had lived in Paris for the last forty years and could hardly speak Hungarian at all. His trade was making ladies' white evening shoes.

'Monsieur,' he said with a broad smile running across his

shaven face. 'Thirty years from me many, many white satin, *vous savez*, slippers. . . . In Paris. . . . Here you could cover this yard with them.' And he gestured again with wide-spread arms.

There was a stir among the new-comers at the appearance of a tousled, untidily dressed figure. He was wearing a shabby fur coat, which he wrapped round him with a dramatic swirl of seediness. For all his short stature and untidiness he had a certain bearing. He must have some secret store of strength.

'Demeter Bistrán,' he said, shaking hands with everybody. And then he set to stroking his long moustaches and looking at us with inquiring eyes.

The others began to laugh at and with him. Zsiga Nagy told me that his store of energy was madness. He had drunk his mind away. Once he had been a good hand in a tanner's yard, but for the last few years he had been fit for nothing. Nagy told me there was another madman too: old Uncle Sarkadi, who believed himself to be God. Bistrán contented himself with the modest title of prophet.

Bistrán's appearance livened the mood of the gathering. They told me he had been once a Hussar in Transylvania and from his time there had kept a few good Hungarian songs.

So we encouraged him to sing, and we hummed in accompaniment. Gradually we formed a little choir and sang folk-songs, old *kurucz* songs. The high grass screened us, and the trees' green was over us.

More strangers appeared, more Hungarians, drawn by the singing. Korody, a tanner, only a lad and a good tenor voice. Varga, a joiner and cabinet-maker. Moritz Stein, a very young-faced tanner's apprentice, wearing a bicycling-cap. A tall, slim waiter called Schnitta. Even another schoolmaster, Neufeld, caught by the War in France; and with him was Jenő Maravics, who had been caught on his way back from the Esperanto Congress in Barcelona. He was from Sopron and the son of rich parents.

The singing was becoming louder and louder, and all Hungarians came to its call. A mechanic called Jakuts and a tanner called Schlotter came up together. And then at last, wrapped from shoulders to waist in his green blanket, old "God" himself—old Uncle Sarkadi—stood among us with his attendant Jacob Vantur, who was really of Polish stock but who spoke Hungarian and held rather to the Hungarians.

We only heard their voices in the dark and imagined them to ourselves from their talk and what the others said about them.

It may have been ten o'clock at night, and till then the guard had not taken any notice of us. One of the Germans had called across several times from the other side of the yard to us not to sing because it would cause trouble, but we paid no attention.

Then suddenly a French corporal and two soldiers were before us. They waited till we had finished and then asked what it was we were singing. We told them Hungarian hymns; we had just sung the Anthem. They nodded. '*C'est bien.*' But now we must go to bed.

There was great confusion in No. 6. The space was so niggardly measured out that we simply did not fit in. I profited from the muddle to flee from my neighbour with the sores.

Directly to the left of the door there was a fair-sized window-recess. The floor was of stone there, but at least one could be alone. There I settled. Through the big window I looked out over the walls and moat to a white house standing by itself in its moonlit garden. It was infinitely good to look at it. After the others had all settled down on their straw and were snoring or sleeping quietly I knelt upon the big old flags and stared so out on the garden and the white house. So, in a huddled, kneeling position, with my head against the window-sill, I went to sleep.

The following week or two were spent in making order.

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Bistrán's appearance livened the mood of the gathering. They told me he had been once a Hussar in Transylvania and from his time there had kept a few good Hungarian songs.

So we encouraged him to sing, and we hummed in accompaniment. Gradually we formed a little choir and sang folk-songs, old *kurucz* songs. The high grass screened us, and the trees' green was over us.

More strangers appeared, more Hungarians, drawn by the singing. Korody, a tanner, only a lad and a good tenor voice. Varga, a joiner and cabinet-maker. Moritz Stein, a very young-faced tanner's apprentice, wearing a bicycling-cap. A tall, slim waiter called Schnitta. Even another schoolmaster, Neufeld, caught by the War in France; and with him was Jenö Maravics, who had been caught on his way back from the Esperanto Congress in Barcelona. He was from Sopron and the son of rich parents.

The singing was becoming louder and louder, and all Hungarians came to its call. A mechanic called Jakuts and a tanner called Schlotter came up together. And then at last, wrapped from shoulders to waist in his green blanket, old "God" himself—old Uncle Sarkadi—stood among us with his attendant Jacob Vantur, who was really of Polish stock but who spoke Hungarian and held rather to the Hungarians.

We only heard their voices in the dark and imagined them to ourselves from their talk and what the others said about them.

It may have been ten o'clock at night, and till then the guard had not taken any notice of us. One of the Germans had called across several times from the other side of the yard to us not to sing because it would cause trouble, but we paid no attention.

Then suddenly a French corporal and two soldiers were before us. They waited till we had finished and then asked what it was we were singing. We told them Hungarian hymns; we had just sung the Anthem. They nodded. '*C'est bien.*' But now we must go to bed.

There was great confusion in No. 6. The space was so niggardly measured out that we simply did not fit in. I profited from the muddle to flee from my neighbour with the sores.

Directly to the left of the door there was a fair-sized window-recess. The floor was of stone there, but at least one could be alone. There I settled. Through the big window I looked out over the walls and moat to a white house standing by itself in its moonlit garden. It was infinitely good to look at it. After the others had all settled down on their straw and were snoring or sleeping quietly I knelt upon the big old flags and stared so out on the garden and the white house. So, in a huddled, kneeling position, with my head against the window-sill, I went to sleep.

The following week or two were spent in making order.

The black fortress-monastery was absolutely unprovided with anything. No one had lived in it since 1871; and then the prisoners kept there were probably not confined and only the poorest of them lived in the fortress itself. But now two hundred and forty of us were crowded together here in strict confinement. We were not allowed to go even as far as the well unless under armed escort. We had even the most elementary questions of hygiene to settle somehow.

It was Monsieur Palvadoz, the mayor of Noirmoutier, who was supposed to solve the problem of making that uninhabitable old building fit to receive two hundred and forty prisoners.

We had seen that purple-faced, white-haired village potentate on the day when we arrived. He looked just as the mayor of a small community usually does look: a half-peasant village magistrate in coarse, blue homespun, whose chief mark of gentility was that the uppers of his clogs were of patent-leather.

It was a great event in the life of Monsieur Palvadoz to have to quarter two hundred and forty Boches in his village. News even filtered through to us that this charge made itself felt in his private life. He was in ceaseless strife with his family because his wife and children would not allow him to go to the fort for fear the Boches should do him some harm. Every day he had literally to tear himself from the arms of his beloved ones when he set off to see his prisoners.

This heroism was of course to be seen in his dealings with us. With ponderous strides of his whole two hundredweight of rotundity he would promenade up and down in the part of the yard where a few prisoners were carrying out some *corvée* under the guard of eight or ten times as many soldiers. Maître Palvadoz did not budge much from that strategical position, and if some order of his required his personal supervision he would drag the whole guard along with him to the scene of action. Besides that he had always one of the retired gendarmes with him, whose first duty was to bring us our

post and who showed himself not averse to tips, but who, when he was escorting Monsieur Palvadoz, gnashed his teeth at us from under his long moustache and kept his master constantly covered with his own body as if to ward off attacks.

Palvadoz was always flying into a rage and bellowing. His face then gave a faithful imitation of every colour-change of an angry turkey-cock's neck. Especially if someone came to him with a request. I think all the temper was really assumed to frighten off such petitions. What the old peasant wanted above all was money, and as in any case he had probably been allowed no great sum for the fort's equipment he had to employ all his cunning in order that everything absolutely necessary should be done and yet something find its way into his pocket.

The mayor of Noirmoutier accomplished this difficult task in the following not uningenious manner. He imported planks and tools and for show engaged a deaf-and-dumb French carpenter whom after four days he dismissed, and then completed the greater part of the work with the Tirolese, at no expense to himself.

First of all he patched up one of the low lean-to buildings, one wall of which had completely collapsed. He had the stones taken away and made a new wall out of planks. In the room so made he put tables and benches, also roughly improvised out of boards. With these the dining-room, or as Palvadoz with some exaggeration called it, the *réfectoire*, was complete.

In much the same simple fashion the clog-shod mayor solved the problem of the other necessities. For washing facilities he set a few tubs up along the moat, each on three long legs. We were supposed to let the water pour down over us from a thin plug controlled by a tap. By the second day the tap did not work—to our great satisfaction, for then we had to pull out the whole plug and obtained the benefit of a more plentiful stream of water. With much the same inventiveness Monsieur Palvadoz settled the question of the

latrines as well. On the right of the keep, separated from the main yard by a door, was a smaller secondary yard. Here he had the internees dig a long trench, and laid a couple of planks across it. Thenceforth in rain, in winter, by day or by night this was our place of pilgrimage.

There was still one other important question: the provision of drinking-water. The water had to be brought from the big pump with the iron wheel by the side of the road that led to the wood, which was a good quarter of an hour's walk from us. With this object Monsieur Palvadoz provided us with a hand-cart, and on this we put a two-hundred-litre barrel. With this contraption we brought water several times a day to fill another big wooden barrel set up in the yard. This arrangement, and indeed that of any work concerned with our own provision, we had to think out. Therefore we instituted a barrack-discipline. This was the basis of our life as prisoners.

First of all the various rooms—*chambrées* as they were called—elected room-presidents, *chefs de chambrées*. They transmitted to us orders from above and arranged *corvées*, or fatigues. There were room, yard, kitchen and water fatigues. These fell to us according to rooms and by turn.

A permanent office was that of the two cooks, of a man who helped with the shopping, and lastly of the head of the *chefs de chambrées*, who provided communication between the room-presidents and the authorities. Monsieur Palvadoz entrusted this position to Fenyvesi, who spoke perfect French. Fenyvesi immediately put on huge, unpainted clogs, which added a curious final touch to the rest of his dress, grey trousers and soft hat. It is true he never put on a collar in Noirmoutier and always looked half-dressed in consequence. His charge gave him a considerable amount of work to do, and he was all day to be seen panting with a thumping of his enormous clogs through the rooms, down the stairs, across the often knee-deep mud of the yard. On the suggestion of Monsieur Palvadoz a jury of nine had also to be formed to deal with differences of opinion among the men or with lesser

disciplinary cases, but it did not last long because no one paid any attention to its verdicts.

In general our daily life proceeded as our lord and master Palvadoz ordained. He gave out the money for our rations, and it may be imagined that if he put aside so much on our equipment it was easy enough for him to pocket a fair proportion of what was destined for our nourishment. His lieutenant, Culoz, the retired gendarme corporal, was his accomplice, though he did not receive a large part of the winnings and his chief source of income continued to be the tips he exacted from the prisoners. He demanded such tips for the slightest service.

The two profiteers naturally found many enemies out in the village, who did not fail to inform the Prefecture of this maladministration of the State's money. Moreover they roused the jealousy and indignation of the commander of the guard, who took Palvadoz and Co.'s meddling in his own and the military sphere of influence as an insult.

The commander of the guard was a little fat sergeant, in peace-time a baker and the father of many children. It was in consideration of these many children that he was allotted that safe duty that was his. He was by nature a not much more brilliant man than the mayor of Noirmoutier. But as a sergeant he had acquired some idea of routine in the various branches of discipline and economics of crowded barrack life. Of this Monsieur Palvadoz had not the faintest notion. So the sergeant, Guillaume as we called him familiarly, was plainly the superior in such matters. Moreover, the sergeant possessed an excellent friend and counsellor in the person of Corporal Georges. Corporal Georges kept a wine-shop in peace-time, and in that trade had so sharpened his wits that he was quite capable of bamboozling Monsieur Palvadoz and the whole magistracy of Noirmoutier without the slightest difficulty. It was probably he who roused the sergeant's jealousy against Palvadoz and continually fed it till one day it demonstrated itself.

It was on the occasion of this famous scene that we first realised the fact of the latent antagonism existing between the two potentates. It was then that Monsieur Palvadoz' hitherto almost supreme authority received such a severe blow as to entail the immediate loss of his not unprofitable post.

One fine morning in the second week of our time at Noirmoutier it happened that Returecki, the big black-bearded Polish painter, was angling out of the window with a piece of string for the latest number of *La France*, bought from a newspaper boy. Unfortunately it was ordained that the secret operations of the newspaper boy crouching in the moat and the Polish painter hanging out of the window should be observed by none other than the wife of the fort's dictator. For, as long as her spouse remained in the fortress, Madame Palvadoz, a prey to unrelenting anxiety, would be prowling round the outside of the walls so that she might immediately be informed if the Boches were killing her husband. It was thus she came to observe this criminal evasion of the official ban on newspapers.

She set up a tremendous din, though she was nothing but the wife of an official, and no official herself. There in the street she began to scream, then rushed in a gasping frenzy to the fort gate and began pummelling with both fists on the door. When they let her in she fairly fell into the arms of her spouse, and panting, gasping, wheezing asthmatically, she told what had happened outside in the moat.

At that a mighty uproar arose.

Monsieur had the "*appel général*" blown, called out the guard, armed, and sent off a soldier with orders to bring back the newspaper boy dead or alive.

At the fearful summons of the "*appel général*" everybody rushed in great excitement from the rooms and from the various corners of the yard to see what had happened.

At Monsieur Palvadoz' command we ranged ourselves in a half-circle before him. Then the soldier arrived leading the bitterly weeping newspaper boy by the ear. With raised

first Monsieur Palvadoz advanced upon the unhappy child who had dared to league with the enemy. Then he turned his furious face, at that moment bluer than the stuff of his coat, on us and commanded the miscreant who would have bought a paper against the official prohibition to step forth. The miscreant could not very well step forth because he was not among us. The bearded Polish painter had thought it prudent not to leave his room. His friend the spectacled, knickerbockered sculptor, who apparently was an accomplice in the affair, stayed with him.

As no one gave himself up voluntarily Monsieur Palvadoz lugged the newspaper boy forward and by cuffing him soundly gave him to understand that it was now his duty to point out the criminal. The grubby-faced, sobbing child went up and down in front of us twice but could not find his partner in crime. When Monsieur Palvadoz had livened his memory with another box on the ear he at length pointed to the bearded German who had a predilection for the company of the young waiters. The German could easily prove an alibi. Ever since early that morning he had been doing kitchen fatigue with ten others. He even had stains on his coat to show in evidence.

More smacks and another prisoner with a beard. This time it happened that the bearded man was one of the Tirolese, who at the time in question was carpentering to Monsieur Palvadoz' orders under that gentleman's very nose.

The unfortunate child was by now fairly giddy with smacks and the contemplation of unshaven, bearded faces, while Monsieur Palvadoz was becoming angrier and angrier and more and more purple in the face till we thought he would have a stroke.

All this time the fat little sergeant stood with his hands clasped on his sharply protruding paunch, smiling contemptuously.

When Monsieur Palvadoz' incapacity had been made clear beyond all doubt the sergeant called two soldiers and gave

them some orders in a low voice. The two soldiers ran off to the emptied keep and after a few tense minutes they returned with the black-bearded painter, all trembling under his overcoat, and the knickerbockered sculptor.

There was no need for the child to point to them. Their whole demeanour was confession.

So there were the miscreants, thanks to Sergeant Guillaume, who knew that if you sound the "*appel général*" it is just as well to look in the rooms also in case someone is hiding in the straw.

They brought the two Poles before Monsieur Palvadoz. The great man glared at them for a moment and then ordered them to be taken away.

'Sergeant, see they get what they deserve!' he said to Guillaume, pointing to the prisoners as they were lugged off.

Guillaume nodded and went on smiling sarcastically. Monsieur turned on his heel and went with heavy, clumping strides towards the gate, where his faithful spouse was waiting for him. Those who had good eyes related that when apparently out of politeness the lord of Noirmoutier let his wife pass first through the gate he dealt her a mighty shove.

We dispersed in a buzz of talk. The two Poles had been locked up in solitary confinement in a damp, dark hole opening off the tower court. The excitement about their confinement lasted all day, everybody discussing it in clusters and groups.

Towards evening the decision was reached that the room-presidents should go to Monsieur Palvadoz and request the release of the Poles from their separate cell for the night. That evening, however, Monsieur Palvadoz did not come to the fortress. He was supposed to be ill, and the faithful spouse was applying hot bricks to his feet.

It was already late at night when the room-presidents, after waiting in vain for Monsieur Palvadoz, decided to go to the Sergeant with their request. They were somewhat tremulous, for as yet no one knew Sergeant Guillaume. So there

was great relief when the room-presidents on entering were received with a genial smile. He agreed to letting the Poles out for the night. As he said, he was not a cannibal, being a baker by trade, and he would take the risk of Monsieur Palvadoz' disapproval. He grinned sardonically and dismissed them.

There was general satisfaction at the news and everybody went off to the rooms to sleep.

The Poles remained still a long time talking in the little tower court. I joined them. It was a moonlit night and there were little warm breezes in the air, for all it was the end of October.

It may have been eleven o'clock when I went up the stone staircase leading from the tower courtyard to the living-rooms. From under the dark vault suddenly a little figure muffled in a fur-collared coat stepped out in front of me and took hold of my arm.

The little figure stepped out onto the top of the staircase. I started back, only then recognising Demeter Bistrán the prophet-tanner, who what with drink and somebody called Klara Enyedi had lost his money, his power to work and finally his mind.

'It's you, is it, Mr. Bistrán?' I said with pretended severity. 'What sort of a game is this, wandering about here at this time of the night frightening people? Go to bed at once.'

Bistrán raised his shoulders and put on an expression of peculiar knowingness, which consisted in his case of lifting his eyebrows and moustache as high as he could, stroking his beard and looking at you out of the corner of his eye.

'As though it was as easy as all that to sleep at such a time,' he said, sinking his voice almost to a whisper. 'The moon won't let me. The moon is my ally and won't let me sleep, so that I can always think of the hammer. . . .'

'What hammer are you talking about, Mr. Bistrán? You're not a smith, after all; you're a tanner.'

Bistrán shook his head in some indignation.

‘Not that sort of hammer. A degree man’s tool. I have got it now, too, and shall strike with it. Look, there will be an end to the war!’

‘Come, Bistrán, don’t talk nonsense,’ I said with assumed cheerfulness, though to be there alone in that ancient, ghostly castle with a madman at night was an uncanny feeling. ‘Go to bed and leave your hammer alone.’

Demeter Bistrán did not deign to reply. He went out to the stone balustrade of the stairs and sniffed, lifting his face to the moonlit night like a bird about to take flight. As I stumbled up the dark stairs I thought to myself that his imagination was probably indeed flying. The poor madman was probably excited by that eventful day, the guard turning out, Palvadoz’ fury, the two Poles dragged off to prison.

I was thinking about that as I began to undress in front of the big moonlight-flooded window of Room 6. I opened the window a little; further I could not, because the draught would have banged open the doors and woken the whole fortress.

For a long time I stood at the window staring into the night, when suddenly from the direction of the yard terrible screams roused me. It was the shocking, horrid screaming of a man taken to the place of his execution and there gone mad.

The straw rustled under the men in the room. Some sat up, listening. I too sat like that for a moment with my heart thumping. Then the scream was repeated and I flung on my coat and rushed out through the two rooms to the staircase. There I met several other shadowy figures and together we ran down to the yard. But there were some who dashed for the roof.

The strange screaming still continued, and I only realised from what direction it came when I reached the yard with the others.

There a strange sight met us. On the top of the fortress, right forward on the very edge of the flat, sharply silhouetted roof, there stood a human figure with outstretched arms, and it screamed. The moonlight was on the man's face, and behind his stretched arms the fur-collared coat opened like black wings. I knew it for Bistrán at once; the others, too, were calling his name. Zsiga Nagy beside me was wailing that the man was going to fall, for he needed to take only one step forward.

Then the guard appeared with lanterns and ran towards the keep. At the same time, on the roof, the crawling silhouettes appeared of some of the men who had guessed what was happening and had gone straight up there.

Then came a tense moment.

Bistrán let his arms drop and stepped yet further forward. He could never have done it without turning giddy if he had been sane.

'Listen to my curse,' he shouted in Hungarian. 'A thousand curses on death and them that shed blood! They shall all die. Here is the hammer in my hand! Now I strike, and then . . .'

He stepped back a little as though to swing for the blow. The men who had crept up behind him profited from that to grab the poor lunatic before he could strike down. Afterwards he often said that the War went on because his enemies stopped him delivering his hammer-blow. . . .

Then the soldiers arrived on the roof and dragged Bistrán down to the yard. The "prophet" went very quietly. There was in his bearing something of that superiority of the great-minded who know that the rabble's triumph is only for the moment.

The corporal wanted to lock Bistrán in the cells, but we appealed to the sergeant, explaining that it was a case of madness. The sergeant let him go, but had the way up to the roof locked for always.

It was midnight by the time the fortress was quiet again.

The pale wanderer of the sky had set, and her mad lover might also return to his bed.

At the end of October there came at last a more resting time for me. Ever since the first days of the War I had felt like a hunted animal, as though with a price on my head. I was alone, without adviser, experience or precedent or example. My whole past seemed to have collapsed and I was horribly afraid that I should never see my own country and my people again.

My father was a schoolmaster in Kolozsvár, the capital of Transylvania. There my brothers lived as well: one a University professor, another a doctor, two more soldiers. I knew nothing of what had happened to them, though I imagined that they had had to join up. I wrote desperate letters to my father, telling him I was being well treated and was in good health (I wonder what face the French censor made when he read that), but always asking the same questions.

Moreover, I knew nothing about Hungary, nor with what feelings the Hungarians had entered the War. Here we were the "Prussians of the Double Monarchy," and Tisza was the biggest villain next to Kaiser William. Yet I felt us to be plunged against our will into a tragic war, with nothing to win even if we should be successful, and if we abandoned the allies whom we had no desire to support we could still not win anything, and had forfeited our honour as well. If it had meant the cession to us of the whole of Serbia or half Europe the War would still not have been worth it. As it was we were fighting for our lives. I was terribly afraid for Hungary, just as I was terribly afraid for my four brothers.

It took two and a half months for the first letter to reach me, from a friend. After that they came in twos and threes, and gave me reassuring news about brothers and friends and family. But the news they held was not the most important part of them. They were everything by the mere

fact of their being facts, tangible facts instead of only fears.

After the letters came money. My luggage was sent on from the little Breton bathing-place where I had been staying. I sent for a woollen cap, a thick muffler, a pair of clogs and a blue sweater from the village. I was preparing for the rainy season. I changed my place in the room as well. I and Fenyvesi migrated to a narrow strip between the door and the window along the side of which, by the good graces of Culoz, I had the French joiner set up a removable wooden screen which should not block out the light by day but should provide some protection from the draught by night.

In this way the window became purely our study, and I put a little gimcrack table and a three-legged stool into it, and so could sit down for the first time to a table with ink and paper and books before me, and leave far away the darkness beyond the screen, where the other forty-two men lay and slept or worked or quarrelled or walked up and down. There I could write to my father as though he were very near.

CHAPTER IV

ROOM SIX

THE autumn rains began. At such times, after two or three days of rain the gate of the fortress could have been left open for all that anyone could have gone out of it. The yard was a couple of feet deep in mud, and it was hardly possible to go from the keep to the little yard or to the wash-tubs. The whole building looked like a big bedraggled pariah-dog. Every ugly feature of it stuck out. Stones and bricks stuck their heads out where the plaster had stripped. All trace of the castle's ancient dignity sank under the all-pervading wetness. In the rooms wet patches spread over the walls. In the tower-rooms the damp mould ran down the walls in bucketfuls. We discovered that our leather things were being covered with a foul, thick slime of mould.

The rain and wet confined us completely to our rooms. Monsieur Palvadoz and his faithful lieutenant now never came to the fort, and there was no one to whom to complain. The military had won the fort, but did nothing about it. The power had fallen into Guillaume's hands; Georges distributed the post. They were full of goodwill but had no authority to do anything whatsoever.

Guillaume was a very worthy fellow, cheerful with everyone. Among the Germans was a schoolmaster called Däumling who had been caught by the War on a study tour in France with four of his pupils. At Périgueux they met another schoolmaster called Nagel. These six were the best of the Germans. The rest were waiters, hairdressers, mechanics and workers of such a sort that in the whole of our long internment together I never succeeded in forming the faintest

idea of their occupation and pre-War mode of living. Guillaume was on as good terms with the Prussians as with anyone else. Once he let himself be photographed under one of the arches, arm-in-arm with the German schoolboys. Later he paid for that with his life. But Guillaume did not know what he was doing. For everything he had a roar of laughter and the reply: "*Je m'en fous.*" He was entirely unconcerned about himself and entirely unconcerned about us.

His secretary, Corporal Georges, had about ten children. He knew he could not be sent to the front. He had not much use for military discipline. "*Allez, vous êtes aussi des hommes!*" he would say by way of expressing his pacific opinions. He was Guillaume's help in the work of creating a complete lack of discipline in the fortress. They never cared if the men sang late into the night. The windows were sometimes lit up until ten o'clock at night, with noise and singing pouring through them. People going along the road past the castle—old men and women of the village—talked jealously of how the Boches amused themselves, and denunciation after denunciation sped from the village to the Prefecture, but not now of Palvadoz and Culoz, but of Guillaume and Georges.

Our situation, however, in rooms crowded with forty-four or forty-six men, in weather when we were all confined entirely to those rooms, was really unbearable. I wrote two letters to French people describing my wretched condition and asking that I should be allowed to live at my own expense in rooms in the village: after all, there was no possibility of escape from the island. One of the letters I addressed to the Prefect of the Vendée, M. Tardif, the other to M. Martha, Professor at the Sorbonne. The one never replied; the other informed me in a few lines that according to his information we were being treated exactly as French civilians in Hungary were treated. This was not true. The French trapped in Hungary by the War were never interned. So I decided not to make any more efforts in **that** direction.

So there was no escape from Room 6. Even what was done for our good only made the situation worse. One day the joyful news came that some straw had arrived and a great heap of mattress-cases. On the first fine day we proceeded by rooms down to the yard and attacked the straw-heap assigned to us. It only took a few minutes for the empty cases to absorb as much as was at our disposal. Then with the huge paillasses on our backs we filed back to the rooms. Here the trouble began, for not even half the filled mattresses would fit into the space into which we were crowded. Out of this arose a mighty quarrelling and a desperate moulding and kneading of the mattresses. The whole day was spent in this sort of gymnastics and in hoarse dispute for every inch of room till at last the paillasses were somehow forced to fit in.

Then the next day it rained again. Room 6 was now throned on mattresses, but everyone had to keep to the room. There was nowhere to go when rain and mud had taken possession of the whole yard.

Room 6 lay parallel to the front of the keep, but its windows did not, like those of No. 5, look out on the yard, but on one side across the wall and the moat to the church and the square in front of it, and on the other side, where Fenyvesi and I slept, on a little village street and a house standing by itself. The mattresses lay down the length of both long walls. Twenty-two on each side. Mine and Fenyvesi's were by the little stretch of wall between the door leading into No. 5 and the window. To the right of the door were another twenty-two mattresses. The last one of them was hard up against the other window, in the recess of which Zsiga Nagy had set up a positive little tailor's shop. The opposite wall was ended by two doors leading into the tower-rooms. In one of the tower-rooms Dudás lived, and in the other three Austrian waiters.

We had ten Austrian waiters in Room 6; on the whole not unintelligent, clean young fellows of good enough appearance. If they had nothing else to do they learned another

language. They nearly all knew English, French somewhat less. A year before the War they had come from London to Paris, where they were waiters in first-class hotels catering for Americans and English. None of them was over thirty.

Their leader was Kaiser. He fully deserved the distinction by his intelligence, practicality and common sense. I think he filled some position in the international union of waiters and so could procure help in the matter of money and clothes for the others as well. He was always clean and brushed, and, considering the circumstances, faultlessly neat. He never took part in quarrels or unnecessary dispute. He had two best friends: Heibl, pimply and thin-voiced, whom he had perhaps adopted because he was helpless; and the black-haired, brown-skinned, Italian-looking Auer, who tended to consumption. Those three worked together all day.

Their next-door neighbour, Hintze, arrived in internment an ardent sport-lover, all cropped hair and clumsy fingers. But he took to music, trained those fingers to feel out the intervals of a violin and in time grew long, barber-like curly hair and wore an "artistically" tied bow. Two other waiters, Neubert and Neuhaus, remained sport-lovers till the end: they used to run round the yard for two hours every day whatever the weather, and every morning they washed from head to foot in cold water. Then came Tauber, who quickly had himself initiated into the affairs of the kitchen and in his turn initiated Hainzl and the barely full-grown Kuhne, the latter very greedy, both of whom were not full-blown waiters but something between a page-boy and a food-waiter.

Of the whole company of waiters the only one who differed from the rest by his solitariness and eccentricity was Tutschek. He became melancholy at the very beginning of his internment, grew a beard, neglected his person and took to praying all day in one of the window-recesses and reading religious books as though the spirit of one of the black penitent monks who once lived here possessed him.

A steady friend of the waiters was a German Tirolese boy whom we always called the Tirolese Adonis. He had really the head of an Apollo. A splendid, clever, curly-haired head set superbly on a beautiful neck. He was very clean and always fresh-complexioned. I do not know what his occupation was in peace-time. He may have been a waiter as well. In any case his face and his figure were luxuries in such a profession. But the Apollo head was extraordinarily empty.

Adonis' best friend was a Tirolese Italian called Braggiotti. They were bound by an affection very rare between Austrians and Italians. Braggiotti was somewhat older than his friend and much maturer and cleverer. He would have been handsome enough if it had not been for something wax-like in his good looks. His eyes were alive with intelligence and temperament, but they had no power of spontaneous expression. Even when he laughed his face remained immobile. Sometimes I was afraid he would tear down his whole face and his real, hidden countenance would grin out at me. Braggiotti was suspected of being bound to Adonis by something more than mere friendship. That was not probable. The Italian was very attracted by women, and he and I on later water-carrying expeditions both fell victims to a fantastic, slavish love of a little American girl.

There were also three young Galician Jews of Austrian nationality in Room 6. They had luminously white faces, tiredly flickering eyes that shunned the daylight. They lay all day on their mattresses, as if their unnaturally long eyelashes had glued their closed eyelids for ever to their faces. They were all very alike, and may have been brothers of one birth. They only stayed two months in Noirmoutier. All of a sudden they disappeared without any stir. One night they were all three taken away. They dressed in silence, without complaint or opposition, put their belongings into a common bundle and then, with their heads low, they filed off silently down the strip of light that the soldiers' lanterns threw before them. They did not look back, but just went

like those whose fate is eternal wandering. I stared after them as if I were dreaming. Only next day I realised with a start that what I had seen had really happened. I asked what had become of them: no one knew.

The two Feldenczers, Korody, Schlotter, Schnitta, then a blond, childish-faced joiner's apprentice called Laya, then Zsiga Nagy and two helps of his, and lastly a tanner's apprentice called Rezanovics: that was the rest of the young men's side.

Opposite them, perhaps by chance or perhaps because the draught was not so bad there, were all the older men.

The Nestor of the room was without doubt old Uncle Sarkadi. But he did not talk much, and he was not only King but—God. He himself told me of the beginning of his madness, laconically, in vague, jerky speech so that I had to put the story together for myself. He was walking on the banks of the Maros; he felt terribly hot and something forced him to take off his top-hat and throw it into the river. He did so. Then he began to shout, and people gathered round him and he told them he was God. After that they took him for the first time to the madhouse.

Later he came to Paris. People who had known him there said he worked well as a tanner. But he began having fits again and spent six months in Charanton. Till the War he worked in a big tannery in Paris, doing his work in silence and only expounding his fixed idea when the fit seized him. Then he declared he was God, that his name was "*Je-sais-tout*," and that Csokonai had foretold his coming. He said it all very confusedly, and neither his workmates nor his employers, both thinking he could not speak French well enough, ever realised they had to do with a madman. His Hungarian mates never gave the poor old man away.

He had brought all his savings with him into internment—about three thousand francs. I first came into contact with him when the old man was frantic with anxiety because the sergeant had taken away his money. They brought him to

me to try and console him. Uncle Sarkadi was wrapped in a green horse-blanket, which he wore like a toga. Under the blanket only his long woollen pants stuck out and his shrunken, hairy legs disappearing into huge, elastic-sided boots. He had the head of a scholar, with curling grey hair growing thick at the sides of it. Only if one looked through his spectacles into the enormously magnified blue eyes—then the frightening emptiness of madness looked back. Those eyes were full of tears when he came to me. With great difficulty I succeeded in reassuring him that he would get everything back. I explained that no one was allowed to bring money into internment. For money he could obtain as many counters as he wanted and with those could buy what he wanted at the canteen. Real money neither he nor anyone else might have with him. This was a device for making escape impossible for us.

The old man flapped his hands.

‘If we wa-anted, we could escape, remember that, Mr. Koncz,’ he said in his broad speech, always calling me Mr. Koncz. ‘I am the *jersaytoo*. I could, but I don’t want to. Let them try without me. I am the only one who will have a say in the matter in the end. You wait and see.’

He flapped his hands again. I was glad he was off on his divinity once more, for it meant he was reassured about the money.

It was an amusement of Room 6 on rainy days to set Sarkadi and Demeter Bistrán against each other.

Bistrán had not much use for Sarkadi. He could see he was mad. Whereas for his own madness he had no such objective standpoint, apart from the fact that he was not really quite mad, only an alcoholic and a little cracked. He had spent quite a long time in America and there had drifted into Freemason circles. There Bistrán had gathered his few ideas about the “degrees” and the “hammer” about which he was always babbling. It must have been there, too, that he had his love-affair with a Hungarian girl of the name of Klara

Enyedi. He was probably taken in by the girl: perhaps it was then he took to drink. When he came back to Paris he was already an alcoholic with a strong persecution-mania and a view of life exclusively concerned with "degrees" and a stolen hammer. He was convinced that his enemies, being jealous of his degree, had stolen it from him through Klara Enyedi. But one day the hammer would come back to him, for was he not a prophet, and as such stood at the head of the list of all degrees? On that moonlit night when he cursed the War from the roof of the keep he had thought the hammer was in his hand.

Apart from this muddled but not unpicturesque theory Bistrán was quite agreeable company. He could tell a story, had a good voice for a song and had no lack of humour. Drink had destroyed above all his ability to work. He had become an unreliable workman, seldom earned anything in consequence, had gradually neglected himself and fallen into abject misery.

He had arrived in internment during one of these periods of poverty, with only his fur-collared coat, one suit of clothes and a few under-things left. For all that, he had no inclination to work. Occasionally he did someone's fatigues and then immediately drank away the money so earned. When he was drunk he abused the Germans fearfully, and they were almost scared by his dark and murderous looks at them. But Bistrán was a very harmless fellow. To use his own expression, "a white dove nested in his heart."

If Bistrán had not much of an opinion of Sarkadi, Sarkadi for his part despised Bistrán utterly. Not only in accordance with his own mad conceit, as "old God" might well despise a mere "prophet," but as the moneyed *petit bourgeois* despises the down-at-heels, boozy tramp. He would never have condescended to debate with Bistrán if on rainy days the inhabitants of Room 6 or visitors coming in from No. 5 had not persisted in setting them at each other.

At such times Uncle Sarkadi led off by declaring Bistrán

to be a drunken good-for-nothing who had nothing prophetic about him, whereas his own coming had been foretold by Csokonai.¹ That all the world knew, Poincaré as well, for he had purposely had him locked up here: but we should see who was stronger in the long run. . . .

Bistrán at such talk would twist his moustache and wink cunningly at everyone: 'Listen to what the old madman's babbling!' He avoided face-to-face disputes, confining himself to walking up and down the room muttering sarcastic remarks under his moustache at the old man. These were then caught by the audience and transmitted to Uncle Sarkadi. Sarkadi would sit on the end of his mattress, wrapped in his green mantle and with a bowler hat on his head, and remark with infinite superiority:

'From a ma-ad hole blows a ma-ad wind.'

Once we arranged a trial between the two of them to decide which was the mightier. We initiated Uncle Sarkadi beforehand and told him the cigarettes would be hidden under the eighth mattress on the left. The contest consisted of seeing which could tell where this prize was. The joke went against Bistrán not only because it was quite the proper thing to have God's connivance in such a matter but because Bistrán was a great smoker and Uncle Sarkadi never smoked. The prize to the competition was that whoever could say where the cigarettes were could keep them.

The duel of divinities roused great interest. We set up a special jury with Müller, the maker of white slippers, who loved presiding at anything, as its chairman.

First came Bistrán. He scratched his bushy, straw-stuck hair. At length he wriggled out of it with a bad joke:

'Where is it? Well, not in my pocket, anyway.'

Then it was Uncle Sarkadi's turn. Old "God," against all our expectations, played his part perfectly. He nosed about with his great, red face in its frame of silvery hair, then with sudden absolute decision pointed to the mattress.

¹ Hungarian poet.

‘Laft, eighth.’

The jury hastened to the spot indicated, and duly found the cigarettes.

Bistrán looked on in some confusion. He did not like such prophetic competitions in which the cigarettes came to someone else. He thought there might be a trick somewhere. But on the other hand he did not think it impossible that old Sarkadi really could do something in the way of miracles.

Now came the greatest moment. The jury solemnly presented Sarkadi with the cigarettes. But the old man did not take them. He wrapped his green blanket tighter round himself, looked Bistrán up and down contemptuously and said:

‘Give them to that beggars’ prophet. He, he. . . . The prophet’s teeth would go rusty if old God were not in the world.’

With that Uncle Sarkadi turned and with dignified gait left Room 6. Bistrán was completely crushed, but it did not affect his accepting the cigarettes.

But of all the men in Room 6 it was old Müller who provided most entertainment as long as the rain and mud kept us shut up in the rooms. Müller was well over sixty, yet he had arrived in internment with a distinct touch of a certain disease. He was not in the least put out when they teased him about it. On the contrary, he was very proud that he could still have to do with women, and confided to his better acquaintances that he was at the moment in correspondence with his landlady’s daughter, a marvellously beautiful creature not past thirty years old.

Once I inquired about this correspondence of his, and from then on he brought his love-letters to me at every opportunity and made me read them through from beginning to end. He would stand in front of me with his big bald head cocked to the left, in his green apron, black knickerbockers, clutching his cap in his hands, and wait till I reached the end of the

often twenty or twenty-two pages of his childish handwriting. I think the old man copied them partly from a book of love-letters of some sort.

I would praise him highly when I finished reading. That had a tremendous effect on old Müller. He drank in my compliments like syrup. His face paled and his mouth under his little blob of a nose opened to such a broad smile that I thought it would divide the upper part of his face from the lower. And all the time he stammered: 'Think you so, Monsieur? Think you so? . . .' which was his private way of rendering the French "*pensez-vous*."

Müller in himself was a queer enough figure—I think because of his big bald head and his shaven, wrinkled face. Added to that were his flappy knickerbockers and his green apron. But even more remarkable than his appearance was his habit of always trying to be very polite and choice in his speech. The effect was that of a tenth-rate actor playing a courtier. His greatest fault was his infinite conceit. He could get quite intoxicated on a word of praise, and then it was as if he had completely lost his senses, his sense of proportion and everything else rational, and you could do with him and make him believe whatever you wanted.

He had a serious taste for improving his mind. He asked me to give some lectures on literature to the men. I agreed. We formed a pedagogical committee, one member of which was Fenyvesi, the second myself, and the president Müller. An Austrian painter called Willersdorfer drew posters announcing our lectures—ruined buildings with a book in a blaze of glory above them, symbolical of knowledge the builder-up of ruins.

The French lectures were held in the dining-room. I gave the same lectures as I had given a year before in Budapest. Then I had a fine lecture-hall and five hundred listeners before me. Now it was a rickety-sided shed with uncouth, shadowy figures barely visible in the light of an oil-lamp. The literary lectures were held every second day, alternating

with Fenyvesi's course about technical development in the nineteenth century.

Of course Müller attended every lecture. With his green apron from shoulder to knees and his baggy knickerbockers there he sat next to the lecturer in the half-light of the oil-lamp with its broken shade, where his big sweating head took on a peculiar luminosity. For sure Müller believed that all knowledge and the doctrine of every one of those lectures emanated from that head of his.

Müller gave a punctual account of every lecture in the letters to his landlady's daughter, expressing at the same time the hope that his great merit in the work of popularising knowledge would be taken into account by the French authorities and he would in the end be set free, for his whole life he had been nothing but an innocent maker of satin slippers, and now above all wished for liberty to make a pair of such shoes for the most beautiful pair of feet in France and to lead their bewitching owner to the altar. . . .

This flowery language naturally caught the eye of Guillaume and Georges, who had to make a preliminary censorship of such letters as were written in French. They were highly delighted, sent for Müller, praised him greatly and finally arranged a practical joke that provided the old man with the happiest moments of his life.

One day the sergeant sent for Müller, Däumling and myself to his office, where, according to the news spread in all the camp, Müller was to receive official recognition of his services, in the shape of a promise of the Légion d'Honneur. The men waited below in the yard while we went through the ceremony in the sergeant's office. It began with Däumling and I alternately reading aloud Müller's last love-letter, all about the lectures.

Then Guillaume stood up and read with amazing fluency and all the proper official terminology an expression of M. Poincaré's thanks to M. Müller and a promise not only of the Légion d'Honneur but of a statue outside the Black Monas-

tery. After that Guillaume saluted him and in the name of his warders handed him a bouquet of faded flowers.

Müller believed everything, and wept. He hugged the bouquet to his green-aproned front like a little girl, and bobbed a curtsy on his clogged feet as he tried to bow.

Outside he was chaired right round the place and through all the rooms in a solemn procession of congratulation, beaming tearfully all the way. Only when it came to Room 6 did Fenyvesi stop the clownery, for we were afraid of the consequences when the old man found out the hoax.

But Müller's iron-bound conceit stood every celebration. He found nothing exaggerated that was to the glory of his virtue and qualities. He was not even annoyed with Fenyvesi for having sent his admirers packing. You could see on his face that he understood perfectly and held it for natural that Fenyvesi should be jealous of the distinction accorded to himself.

Opposite me, on the old men's side, between Uncle Sarkadi and Müller there lay three men who were bound by a friendship which for some time was quite incomprehensible to me. They were Varga, a cabinet-maker; Edward Bilharz, an undersized, toothless, merry, somewhat disreputable Viennese whom everybody called by his Christian name; and lastly Rosenberg, a Hungarian Jew whose trade was street-hawker in Paris. Three so radically different figures that I was not the only one to wonder what could be the bond of emotion that even from pre-internment time held them together.

Varga had fair, waxy hair and a fair beard, was neatly dressed and quiet-spoken, interlarding his speech with French words. He had come to Paris on the occasion of the Great Exhibition and had stayed because of a French girl and the good earning possibilities. Before the War he had thought of marrying and setting up on his own, but in the

mobilisation all his belongings had been destroyed and he had now only his pen-knife left, and with that he worked.

Varga had a great admiration for Edward, who in comparison to him looked like a broken-down old tramp. Edward was a glass-blower in Paris before the War, which accounted for his lack of teeth. He was supposed to have two daughters married to French officers and quite prosperous; but they never helped Edward. The first time I ever saw him in Noirmoutier he was just as dilapidated. Even Demeter Bistrán, fast becoming shabby, kept up a better appearance than Edward, though Edward earned more money than Bistrán. By flattery and wit he had come to be engaged as servant by the wealthy young Maravics, who spent all day smoking and studying his books of genealogy. He engaged Edward as court buffoon and secretary.

Edward knew everyone and was everyone's friend from the first moment. He even had traffic with the soldiers, gaining their admiration by his mastery of the Parisian argot.

His friend the red-haired Jew hawker had on the other hand no dealings with anybody. He let his red hair and beard grow longer and longer and retreated every day more and more into it. Meanwhile he became thinner and thinner, and his one overcoat, which he always wore, gradually turned into a loose, flapping cloak, a sort of second retreat. He invariably carried his own drinking-vessel, a tin jam-pot, about with him, and was not to be separated from it even at night. They said he did it for religious reasons. But he told me that it was because he was afraid of being poisoned. I once had quite a long talk with him when he came to ask me about Rousseau, whom I had described in a lecture as a lover of solitude.

The old men had a habit, especially when the rain had stopped and the others were down in the yard, of coming to lean on my screen in the evening, and talking. They could see me clearly, for I sat in the window-recess. I could only occasionally see their eyes gleam, or catch a glimpse of their

faces. Bistrán and "God" and old Müller and the much-travelled Polish-Hungarian tanner, Vantur, and many others came so to talk. I heard curious things, often astonishing things. Sometimes the darkness swallowed the speakers quite up, and only their voices lived. And then they would go off on their clumping, iron-shod clogs out at the open door into No. 5 and so down the winding stair into the tower court. Their steps faded quite away. To think what they were and what they had said was to ask myself if I were not dreaming.

It was in this way that I heard the story of Varga's, Edward's and Rosenberg's friendship. They had all three gone through a dreadful manhandling at the hands of the French in the Conciergerie. They had found themselves together in a filthy cell, and from then on they could not be apart. They were two weeks together in the Conciergerie, and heard and saw dreadful things. Varga told me it all in the plainest words. It gave a terribly vivid impression of the Conciergerie at mobilisation-time and of the work of hasty and pitiless judgement on those suspected of spying. To his account Varga added but one remark:

'There's a good side to everything. If they hadn't tortured me every night there with their saying I was to be taken out to be shot, perhaps my heart would not have got in such a state and there would not be any chance of my being sent with the first sick convoy to Budapest. . . . But now I must go. There's the call to *soupe*, and that Rosenberg won't touch his food till I have tried it for him.'

The dust-film with which the sliding, grey days of internment were beginning to cover us was stirred again by a tempting opportunity. We were offered the chance of enlisting in the Foreign Legion. Later, too, lists were circulated for volunteers.

This time, however, there were scarcely any volunteers. We therefore the more regretted that among the few who

went the two Polish artists should have been. Why they went no one knew. They were both artists and sensitive men, and they joined a Legion where only cunning could prosper and where a man would die though he had a hundred lives.

Especially Rucki's going astonished me. I have never met anyone blessed with so direct and pervading an artistry. For him all life consisted of colours and lines and play of light and shade. He had nothing to do with a moral, emotional or intellectual attitude to life. As soon as he had to look at anything from such a standpoint he lost patience and became nervous and gave way to the first outside influence. Now at the last moment he wanted to hold back, but his friend, whose opinion could not budge him an inch in matters artistic, said 'No,' and Rucki went.

Stronski himself said it was because he had given his word and would not take it back.

I think that was an excuse. Stronski had deeper reasons. His going was the epilogue to that silent man's unhappy love and marriage. He had married a rich, lovely Polish girl and had lived very happily with her in Paris. But just before the War he learnt indirectly that his wife was unfaithful to him. A terrible mania of discovering the truth seized him, and he traced her back through every tavern, low hotel, studio, every place where by the merest guess his wife might have been. Everywhere he sought out how long and with whom the woman had been. In that dreadful recapitulation he discovered that his wife had been unfaithful to him more or less from the beginning. And not with one man but with every man who in the slightest won her favour. And all with a face of angelic innocence.

Three days before the War broke out she left him. Since then she was nowhere to be found, though Stronski hunted for her in Paris and from internment wrote to all his friends asking if they knew of her. He could not sleep at night from his haunting. If only he were back in Paris he would find

her, track her to the hotel and tear her from the arms of the man with whom she might be. The inhabitants of No. 5 said he used sometimes to leap up from his place in the night and with a great cry run out of the room.

One such night I met him, in the tower court. He had only a shirt and his clogs on. He was standing by the keep wall, gasping, his head low. I thought he was ill. I put a coat over him and made him sit on the stairs. Then he told me the whole story, every detail of that horrible tracking.

I think it was more because of this than of his given word that he enlisted in the Legion. The haunting picture of that whoring woman drove him to take the one chance of one day being free and going back to Paris, and on the pretext of his given word he took Rucki with him. After they and the Alsatians—no one said good-bye to the Alsatians—had gone we heard two months later that the two Poles had been shot in the first skirmish after they finished their training.

Returecki said nothing, but muffled himself in yet greater taciturnity and grew hairier and hairier.

Then Returecki and the other two Poles, one of whom was a hawker—whose place in Noirmoutier was filled by a couple of far cleverer Germans—were all taken away for field-work. With their detachment went the lawyer from Budapest, his elegance still untarnished. We heard that after many adventures he reached home and fought on the front and ended again in a prison-camp, this time in Vladivostok. Apparently his nerves never gave way, though in Noirmoutier he always said he was afraid of going mad any moment.

After the Poles had gone, the market for disposal of little artistic products among the men became the monopoly of a German sculptor and an Austrian engraver. The two German agents negotiated the sales, quite indifferently combining them with their traffic in cast-off trousers, old boots and tattered shirts.

The German sculptor's name was Von Bergen. He had an

interesting artist's head and a stormy past. It was said he had served a term of five years' imprisonment in England for a bank fraud. He certainly seemed to have some practice in prison-living. He used to carve little statuettes of kneeling women, and kept himself in wine and tobacco from their sale. The touching thing about this somewhat mass-produced article was that in every case it represented his mistress in Paris, a Russian revolutionary with almost nigger lips. He used to recommend his work to a buyer by explaining whom it represented, and when he had to separate himself from such a statuette he would longingly feel the woman's big, swelling breasts and run his finger down her thighs in an access of valedictory tenderness. And the next day he had another Natasa ready. The same thick-lipped, big-breasted, round-thighed Russian woman.

Willersdorfer was a much younger and more pedantic artist than Von Bergen. He drew with a careful and precise sense of style. He had only one passion beside his work—the cats which lived in a half-wild state in one of the unused buildings in the yard. He had somehow tamed these monsters, which fattened on the mice of the fortress, till of evenings they came squeezing one after another under the gate to come and arch their backs to voluptuous ripples under Willersdorfer's hand. I often went to visit him in No. 4. He would be hunched over his paper in one of the window-recesses, like a monk at work illuminating a manuscript. His black, shiny-smearred hair grew low over his collar at the back. The skin of his face was like parchment. Thick eyebrows and a prominent, powerful nose were the only features that disturbed the crone-like shrivelledness of his face. He worked silently, motionlessly, as though his figures proceeded from the womb of devotional stillness. It must be religious things he was drawing with such absorption—yet if you bent over his paper you saw with a shock that his thirsty fantasy was burning the most frenzied scenes of lechery onto the paper.

Towards the end of November two smaller groups of volunteers for field-work detached themselves from the Black Monastery. We heard that if such workers were lucky enough to be put on farms or biggish properties they were treated humanely enough. We would perhaps willingly have gone also, to escape from the especial hardships of confinement in winter, but the treatment we had received had forged in us a prisoner's self-respect which did not allow us to go out to work unless we were forced to do so. Out of two hundred and forty of us altogether only twenty or thirty went to such work.

All this change was connected with like processes carried out in every civilian camp on the mainland. In every camp there was a last drumming for recruits to the Foreign Legion and for working parties; the Poles and Czechs were eliminated; and lastly, arrangements were made for the women out of the family camps and the men over sixty-five and the children under sixteen from all camps to be sent home.

The news of this order reached us at the end of November. It meant that at last someone would be going home who could tell them what had happened to us, intercede for us in competent places, and, if there was no possibility of arranging for our better treatment, at least arrangements could be made for having clothes and tobacco sent to us through the Red Cross. The French authorities were indifferent to someone going barefoot or in the most insufficient of clothing all winter, and supplied us with no clothing on their own account. Our situation was not organised at all, and later, when they did organise it, it brought us no good.

There were only a few at Noirmoutier in the category of children or men over age. Among the latter was a grey-haired, short-moustached, dilapidated-looking old invalid who caused the authorities some considerable trouble because they could in no wise discover where to send him. The old man could not talk any language at all. He was supposed to know Polish best, but when he heard that it was proposed

to send him to Cracow he set up a tremendous caterwauling. He protested in a stammering mixture of Polish, French and Serbian against being taken there, because his mother and his aunts were there and he never wanted to see them again. It was explained to him that as he himself was seventy-five his mother and his aunts were most probably no more alive, but the old man would still hear nothing of Cracow. In the end they despatched him to Vienna.

Among those on the list was the youngest German school-boy, whom everyone was sorry to have go. Däumling and Nagel, the two schoolmasters, lived with their pupils under the worst of conditions in No. 2. It was the dampest and darkest room and in addition received a constant rain of dirt from the rooms above through cracks in the ceiling. Their room-mates were German workmen, seamen, dockers and tramps; loud, foul-mouthed men who spent all their days playing cards and quarrelling and brawling in the room. Nevertheless Däumling and his party had cleverly shut off their compartment with curtains and blankets so that they had comparative peace and seclusion for their studies. The two German schoolmasters had established a perfect school, with regular hours for the boys and books for which they had sent from home. They came to an arrangement with the German school authorities that the years spent in imprisonment should count for the boys as regular school years.

The departure of the youngest and nicest boy left a painful gap in that little society. For a week they did no work for taking leave of the boy. He had to learn what he was to write and to which of the relations and friends of those staying behind. The boy had to learn the more private letters by heart. All that legacy and discussion brought the homes and parents and friends of the other three boys, who were only a few months older, so desperately near that they were nearly ill of it. It was then we made friends with Däumling and Nagel, playing cards with them for their consolation.

Of the Hungarians little Feldenczer and old Uncle Sarkadi

were on the list. Both lived in No. 6. They began days beforehand to sew and patch and darn at little Feldenczer. They hid letters in every conceivable place on him, from the soles of his shoes to the lining of his hat. He succeeded in delivering everything when he reached Hungary. Once home he gave up his trade of tanner and with the aid of his languages became porter in a hotel.

Old Uncle Sarkadi was to go to Kolozsvár itself, for originally he had set off from there, and he still had relations living there. I was desperate that someone should be going to my town and yet I could not send word by him. Uncle Sarkadi would not allow a single letter to be sewn into his clothes. He said it was unnecessary, for he was omniscient anyway. I think the old man at bottom was afraid.

On the evening before he left he came once more and stood by the screen to say good-bye to me.

His face showed no excitement. The long journey he was to undertake, the return home, left him quite unconcerned.

'So they're taking you to Kolozsvár, Uncle Sarkadi?' I asked him, my imagination clinging to that ruin of a man to go with him on his journey. 'Tell me, will you go and see my father when you come to Kolozsvár? Do you know where the Majalis Street is?'

The old man nodded.

'Of course I know. I was there in '95. It was called that then, too.'

'What will you tell them at home, Uncle Sarkadi?' I asked, hoping dreadfully that I might yet send some message.

'I shall tell them Mr. Koncz was shut up here because of me,' he said with a cold, unapproachable, mad vanity. 'Everybody was shut up because of me. The whole war was made because of me.'

I would have liked to shake the old man out of the bands of his madness. I nearly implored him to pay attention to what I was saying. Tell them at home how I live, where I am quartered, among whom I am. Tell them I was always

dreaming of Kolozsvár; my ticket for there had been already taken last June when it was ordained I should go to Paris.

Uncle Sarkadi stared at me coldly, without the slightest comprehension. I could see that I and everything round me and all life were reflected in his eyes but never reached his brain, with its loathsome delusion hovering jealously over it like a hawk over its prey.

‘Uncle Sarkadi, touch the house, the house in the Majalis Street, with this hand that I am touching,’ I said in last desperation.

The old man nodded queerly. Perhaps he thought it was I who was the madman. ‘Very well, very well, Mr. Koncz, I will do it gladly.’

Then I went out with the old man down the stairs, in case he should fall, for he seemed to be bearing something very precious from me.

‘*Il fait bien froid chez nous!*’—Müller’s long-drawn bellow, regardless of all melody, woke me. Outside, a misty, rainy haze. Müller was banging away by the light of a little lamp and singing his favourite song about the *polichinelle* and the little child ill in bed. Müller used to sing it in a voice trembling with sentiment, the others joining in mockingly, for it was very cold in the room. Müller beamed and gripped his clog between his knees to bang the nails in.

A door opened in the next room. The wind, as though enraged at being kept out so long, forced itself howling, booming and whistling through every crack.

Someone came to say that it was the turn of Room 6 for the baths. The hot water was ready for the first two men.

Fenyvesi and I were numbers one and two in the room.

That was the first occasion in Noirmoutier that hot water was to be had. I put on my dressing-gown. I had not had it on since the days when it could mirror itself in the water by the little Breton bathing-place. There was still the tang

of salt and the smell of sand in its tufts. I hurried on my old green overcoat over it to hide the fastidious thing from its present surroundings.

‘Monsieur, wouldn’t you la-ike me to help you?’ said Jacob Vantur from one of the mattresses opposite me.

Jacob of the many tongues and of no tongue perfectly had long ago offered me his services. After my money came he did my fatigues for me. He performed small jobs and was content with small remuneration. Jacob was a friendly enough fellow. His complexion was perhaps somewhat sallow, but there was nothing but goodwill in his greenish-blue Slav eyes. The other tanners said he was a money-grubber. He had collected quite a respectable fortune in furs before the War. Now everything belonging to him was scattered to the four winds, and what his lodging-companions had not stolen was stowed away somewhere in boxes. Jacob spent many sleepless nights in agonies of anxiety lest the moths should have eaten what remained of his possessions. Ruined Jacob did not renounce his passion for collecting even in internment; only now he collected leaky tin pots, heaps of empty tins, rusty barrel-hoops, cast-off clothing and rags of any sort, overflowing from his own section of shelf to that of Demeter Bistrán, who never had anything on his. And apparently I was to contribute to the restoration of his fortunes.

I muttered something without giving any comprehensible answer, and Jacob was already at my side. He picked up the soap and towel, then hurriedly put on a coat and jabbed his feet into his clogs. Then we went off together down the winding, wooden stairs, then the stone staircase to the yard—swimming in mud—where by jumping from one stone to another we reached the cellar which had been christened bath-room.

It was a positive catacomb where we were sacrificed to the goddess of Hygiene. In the light of a solitary candle in the dark cellar stood two high, narrow barrels with the steam of

hot water smoking up from them. These were the baths. It was just as well to have Jacob's help here. I could only kneel or squat with my knees up to my chin in the barrel. Soaping myself was out of the question. That was why Jacob had come, to bath me. He knew something of the miseries of that bathing.

He took up the big cake of yellow soap, and soaped me and scrubbed me and pummelled my back; stood me up, pushed me back down again into the water, poured the soapy mixture all over me. The soap got into my eyes. Unexpectedly, involuntarily the picture rose before me of my mother bathing me. A queer emotion took me at the thought of that horny workman's hand scrubbing where once my mother's hand had touched. I looked down at the full-grown expanse from my shoulders to waist—once a hand-span, now long and rib-furrowed—and thought of the distance I had covered since then; and then to look round was to think I was living in a nightmare.

'Now slip on your dressing-gown quickly,' ordered Jacob. He rubbed me dry, helped me to dress and ran back with me to the keep building. That mattress was now so filthy I could not lie down again on it. I sat down at my table. A couple of minutes later, to my astonishment, Jacob appeared again, bringing me hot coffee and bread and jam.

'After this it will always be like this, Monsieur. And I will make you, how you say, *drap*, and it will be Jacob who keeps clean Monsieur Kuncz' paillasse.'

That was Jacob: nurse, valet, cook and in many things friend.

CHAPTER V

FIRST BLOOD

OUR doctor was a short-sighted, deaf old gentleman. He came every second morning and received those who were trusting enough to believe the old gossip's diagnoses.

Once I went to consult him. He took down my personal data, and when I said I was a Hungarian, he repeated several times: '*Ah, Hongrois, Hongrois. . . . Budapest, n'est-ce pas?*'

I told him what were my symptoms. He made me lie down on the bare room's single iron bedstead, and began to knead my stomach. While he was performing this operation he kept on saying:

'Do you know? The Russians are in. The Russians are in. . . .'

Then the old gentleman straightened up and with tragical seriousness, as though pronouncing sentence of death, he said:

'If you did not know it, I will tell you. Budapest has fallen. The Russians have walked into your capital.'

With that diagnosis I withdrew.

That was towards the end of November.

At the same time he pronounced a famous sentence on an oldish German of the prisoners who complained of his heart.

'*Voyons*, you complain, and with that heart you can live another hundred years.'

Old Jungblut, or, as he was called by the other men, the Old Eagle, stumbled with wagging head down the stone stairs leading from the sick-room, and as he reached the yard he collapsed.

The men crowded round him and tried to rub him back to life, but he never regained consciousness.

Jungblut was our first death. The suddenness of it raised an understandable excitement in the camp. Everybody wanted to know who he was and of what he had died. It appeared that no one knew him, and he had never joined conversation with anyone so long as he was among us. Bismarck gave him the name of Old Eagle because he was always crouched on the ruins of the wall or one or other rotten tree-trunk, staring impassively in front of himself with lightless eyes. His face became more and more shrivelled, and the prominent, strongly-hooked nose above his ragged beard and moustache increased even more the resemblance to a bird of prey.

For the rest we knew that he had served five years in the French Foreign Legion, and before that had been in the Dutch Legion. It was incomprehensible that this ageing man should be locked up like the rest of the Boches, for he had served France for five years. Perhaps that was what turned Jungblut melancholy.

All his belongings consisted of a patched and grimy suit of that familiar, unspoilable sort of velvet stuff of which French workmen's clothes are made. The trousers were cut after the fashion of the baggy Parisian working-trousers, so it might be concluded that before the War he was working in Paris. For objects of value, there was a big nickel watch with a mighty silver chain on one end of which was a silver medallion with a name engraved on it—Emilia.

His belongings were put into a little black-painted wooden box. This little soldier's trunk, where a few underclothes, a collection of buttons in a tin, screws, three short-stemmed pipes and a faded picture-book in German were packed, was sealed and put up on some shelf of the Noirmoutier prison office, there to remain, the official dossier of a man's unknown life.

Old, war-worn Jungblut's corpse suffered another official

procedure. They took him to the mortuary in Noirmoutier, dressed him in fresh linen and his only suit, leaving his watch in his pocket. There was in it a completely illegible, yellow, tattered letter, which was also left. So they laid the Old Eagle in a rough-wood coffin.

The funeral was the next day. Orders were issued that the ceremony should be carried through without attracting attention. Altogether twenty of us went out of the Black Monastery to fetch Jungblut from the mortuary. We took the most out-of-the-way streets from the hospital to the church. We went in fours, with a close escort of soldiers. The only mourning pomp was the tramp of our feet echoing in the narrow streets.

The soldiers hustled us through the church door. We had to come briskly all the way, almost sneaking along as if we were committing a crime. The door clanged to behind us.

Inside, another world received us. The church was filled with a soft, silvery light filtering through the big windows. A blue-robed, gently-smiling statue of the Virgin was on the main altar. We drank in the peace and freedom from hostility like men thirsty to death.

They set Jungblut's coffin down. Then a grey-haired priest came, and sprinkled the coffin with holy water. There was no hurry, as if in demonstration against officials who even in a dead man could see only an enemy. But perhaps that was illusion. We were in the church in which a hundred years before the revolutionaries had imprisoned fifteen hundred followers of God and the King, and one night killed them by thirties in the sand-dunes.

Outside the church, the soldiers surrounded us again and we sneaked back through the same streets to the hospital and towards the cemetery. In front of the locked gates of the cemetery soldiers were standing, who opened the gates as we came up and quickly banged them shut after us. Were they afraid the islanders could come and attack us even there?

In one corner of the cemetery was the black earth of the

dug trench, and we ranged ourselves round the grave. There were only we prisoners and the foreign soldiers: no bell-ringing, but an attentive, all-absorbent silence. The weather was gentle enough for late autumn, and there were a few leaves yet on the trees.

The coffin was bare now of its pall, and a rope was round it. There was a big plane tree near the grave, its almost bare, wet-blackened branches sharp-silhouetted against the stuff of the sky. I was to say good-bye to the dead man, and just as I was about to speak a leaf rustled on a branch and floated down over the grave with slow flutterings like a little exhausted bird, then disappeared into the trench as if showing the way. Then I forgot all the French I ever knew, for not even the leaf was as desolate as Jungblut, of whom no one knew where was the bough and tree where he belonged.

The escort was drawn up opposite us, not standing to attention in salute. But there came a little movement and lessening of the tension. The big corporal commanding the escort turned and took his men with him.

So when we had filled in the grave and made a mound over it we could go home, scattered and quietly, with no one to hurry us along.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTMAS EVE IN NOIRMOUTIER

A WET winter after a wet autumn. The only change in the weather came in the first week of December, when snow fell and for a couple of days covered the island in white. It amounted to a great event in those parts. The south-west side of the island especially had a very mild climate. The Gulf Stream brushed the island and had a strong influence on the climate of the side facing the Atlantic Ocean. There mimosa bloomed at the end of January, in February the fruit trees put on their best clothes, and vegetables were to be had more than a week earlier than on the mainland. There was a wood of some size on that part of the island: it ran right down to the shore, and there were scattered villas and bungalows in it. In summer this part of the island was much frequented by holiday-makers.

The Black Monastery was built on the side of the island facing the mainland. The island was connected with the land by a narrow strip of sand where at ebb-tide it was possible to cross with a carriage, if the horses were well whipped up. On this side the climate was by no means so mild as on the west. But here, too, hard winters were unknown, and for the last twenty years or so the islanders had never seen snow. The extraordinary event of a snowfall was of course attributed to the presence of the Boches.

There may have been some truth in the matter, but it is certain that we enjoyed neither the snow nor the continual rain. The eternal confinement to the mouldy-aired rooms made the men bad-tempered and excessively nervous. If a stranger had gone round the rooms of the fortress on such

days he would have thought he was in a madhouse. In every room there would be at least two or three mouth-organs being played, besides fiddles, mandolins and guitars. Among the Tirolese were seven untamable gypsies. They had never in their lives stayed so long in one place as they now had to: they satisfied their eternal need for movement by dancing all day long. One of them scraped at a fiddle and the rest sang and jumped about and slapped their legs. They lived in No. 3. In No. 2, the Germans' room, where Däumling's unfortunate pupils had to do their lessons, there was a ceaseless quarrelling about places. The youngest German school-boy and an old Bavarian having left, the two empty places had to be divided up among the rest. It was no easy task to divide justly two places hardly a yard and a half wide in all among forty-two men. So the eternal bickering, which not guitars, mandolins, hammering and sawing all together could drown, was understandable.

Von Bergen lived in that room, too. I had him make me a 'cello. It was an original-looking instrument. The body was triangular; the neck he carved out of a bit of wood, of course making, instead of the usual head, his naked Russian mistress sitting above the pegs. The din and quarrelling had no effect on him. He carved away, lips pursed, at the enormous nipples, and if I went to him he looked up at me with eyes as though waking from a dream. Then he would lovingly display every charm of the tiny naked woman, pressing the statue in his hand with such passion that I thought he would never give it up.

No. 5, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, was a comparatively quiet room, with the silhouettes of Soltész, Németh and Neufeld eternally reading. We made a "home" of evenings, and sat round coffee telling stories. Old Müller would slip in from No. 6, wipe the low plank running along the mattresses with his green apron, and squat down very quietly, to listen and beam with happiness.

The two noisiest rooms were Nos. 1 and 4. I very rarely

set foot in them, but whenever I passed their doors I could hear the hellish din from inside. One could go straight into No. 4 from a square sort of ante-room. From here the winding stairs led up to Nos. 5 and 6, and from them we reached the little stone staircase to the tower court. This kind of ante-room was the common meeting-place of the three big rooms, Nos. 4, 5 and 6. It was here we came if we were confined to our rooms by rain and wanted a little movement.

In this ante-room, in the recess under the winding stairs, poor Demeter Bistrán set up house for a little time when the lice got the better of him, and he was therefore excluded from any of the living-rooms. The "prophet" submitted to his fate with great resignation. He knew that this too was the work of his enemies, and his "degree" must have been working too feebly just then to preserve him from such minor misfortunes. He settled for some time with sage resignation in his solitary den, but when he discovered that in the rainy weather the men did not trouble to go for their minor necessities even as far as the tower court, but in the dark simply went no further than his abode and did it into his sleeping-place, or even all over him if he happened to be there, he gloomily decided on a rigorous course of action. One morning he took a hot bath in the barrels down in the cellar and then dressed in a complete fresh outfit of borrowed or cast-off things. His own garments he hurled with an embittered gesture into the hearth where the water was heating. So the lice and the clothes perished together, and the prophet Demeter could again be admitted to citizenship of No. 6.

Life went on in No. 6 with no especial change. The places of old Uncle Sarkadi, little Feldenczer and the three vanished Galician Jews were all quickly distributed, but the five emptied places made hardly any difference to the crowding of the room.

I sat all day in my window-recess, reading. After the months of confinement I could lose myself utterly in an imaginative world conjured up by the books, or in my own dreamings. If I was tired of reading or it grew too dark I still sat there and looked across at the house which stood by itself on the other side of the moat, with the blackened arms and tendrils of wild vine wrapping it round as though to bind it up for fear it should fall to pieces. Nobody ever opened the windows of the house. From the shut verandah four steps led down to the little garden. No one ever went down them. You could still see where the flower-beds were. There was a bench under one of the trees, waiting for someone. No one ever came to it. At dusk I would stare across at the house for hours on end, and believed I saw a woman in white come down the steps and walk in the garden. It was strange that I was always expecting the white-dressed Breton woman, the last woman I had kissed, to come here. But she did not come; no one came at all. And so gradually in imagination I moved into the abandoned house, furnished the rooms and sat in the arm-chairs, received friends and acquaintances, men and women with names such as I had never known. Each one had a special time for coming, each a subject of conversation about which to talk. If I had no guests I had books to take down from my shelves. Sometimes I lived like that for days and weeks over there in the lonely house, and hardly realised it was my imagination playing with me. I think I might have slipped entirely out of my real life into a refuge of fantasy if there had not come letters from home to rouse me and recall me to reality.

One day, to our delight, there arrived through Swiss mediation two big cases from the Hungarian Red Cross. That was proof that little Feldenczer had given all our messages and had delivered the letters describing our situation. The cases contained wonderful warm clothes, boots, woollies and under-clothing enough for every man in the camp who was in need. There were also two litres of rum. There had been cigars

and cigarettes, but only the empty places where they had been packed reached us. That gift was the first ever sent to us, and in magnificence surpassed anything sent later.

In the week before Christmas came a wonderful surprise for me. Probably by the suggestion of the headmaster of the school where I used to teach, my old pupils collected quite a big sum and sent it to me to use as I liked for the other Hungarians at Christmas-time.

The money arrived just in time. There was enough of it not only to provide a Christmas dinner but to let me buy little presents for all the others. To buy the presents I had to go out into the island's little town. I asked Guillaume for permission, and the sergeant agreed. I was two days preparing for that expedition, and the night before it was in such a state of excitement that I could not sleep.

At ten o'clock on the morning of Christmas Eve I reported myself to the guard at the gate. I was given a black-bearded, oldish Breton soldier for escort. The *poilu* fixed his bayonet with a snap, and was just going to shoulder arms when Corporal Georges, the sergeant's omnipotent lieutenant, came up.

'Are you getting ready for the front, old chap?' he said cheerfully to the grumpy old soldier. 'That man can hardly walk in those clogs of his, let alone run away from you.'

So it happened that one single time in the whole of my internment I was escorted by a soldier without a fixed bayonet.

We went across the wooden bridge over the moat and turned into the main road. The tower clock clanged ten.

It was as though I were in a dream. Everything was wrapped in a soft, colourful haze before my eyes. Everything was desperately significant and interesting and precious.

The square which we had first to cross was silent, with a pale, stately reserve. "Place d'Armes"—I read on a board, and then the high-windowed, one-storied houses' arrogance suddenly became comprehensible. In one of those houses Charette had lived, the notorious leader of the peasant Royal-

ists of the Vendée. On this square d'Elbée, the other leader, had been executed, sitting, for he could not stand for his fourteen open wounds. His unwitting wife opened her window, maybe to water her flowers, just as her husband fell back dead under the volley.

The square was empty now. The windows were shut, as though those ancient houses, which had seen so much, were now curious of nothing more.

There was more traffic in the High Street, leading out of the square. People coming towards me eyed me and then got out of my way. Two schoolgirls came along escorted by a nun; the nun whispered something to them and the little girls crossed themselves and turned their heads away. Old women came dressed in black with broad white head-dresses on their silvery hair: they stopped, muttering something, and stared after me for a long time.

It did not matter. I was too happy. I loved them all, all the people who avoided me and despised me and were afraid of me. I would have liked to run to them and touch them, look into every window, stop by every shop, ring at the doors, shout nonsense at the men and run with the horses. A dog must feel much the same, clinging to a great friendliness for man and everything human, for all the kicks he has received.

The bazaar where I wanted to go was opposite Madame Mignale's wine-shop. She now looked after our canteen since her husband had gone to the war. She was standing now, a little bent, in front of her door, and smiled sadly to me. She knew what that walk meant.

In the shop a pretty, fair girl attended to me. My suppressed desires must have leaped across to her, for when I looked at her she flushed. I had a deal to buy for the men. A shirt for one, woollies for another; some needed clogs and some wanted sweaters. Everything was there. Cigars, as many cigarettes as I wanted. The blonde girl laid it all out before me. We chose and arranged and packed the things up, and the while, in hurried, broken whispering for fear the

soldier should hear or someone coming into the shop should notice, we began to talk; a man and a woman who would never see each other again and who wanted to say everything in those few quickly passing minutes. It must be just some such fever that seizes a man when he says good-bye before his execution. And it was queer how naturally and unfalteringly that little, pale-faced shop-girl entered into the game.

The black-bearded soldier told us to hurry up, as though he had forgotten something.

The blonde girl had both hands occupied with the packing-up. She had taken some pins, which she needed to pin the tissue-paper, in her lips. I remarked to her that that was a dangerous thing to do. She said between her lips:

‘Stick them into my blouse, then.’

My finger touched her moist lips, I took out the pins and tried to stick them into her blouse. But I simply could not do it. My hand was trembling as a frightened bird flutters over its nest. The little girl laughed loudly at that. Even the sour-faced Breton *poilu* grinned.

Then we had to go. I went back to the prison, loaded with parcels. The four-towered keep’s bare, weather-beaten walls loomed against the sky. There were tattered, coloured blankets and linen hung out to dry hanging down from the open windows.

As the gate boomed to behind me it was as though some noisy, bright music were cut off, and I was stepping into a cheerless silence.

That evening, in consideration of the Christmas festivities, we were allowed to stay up till nine o’clock. We arranged the Hungarian Christmas Eve in No. 5. Here lived the most Hungarians, and the other inhabitants, except for two, were invited to other rooms. The two forlorn Italian Tirolese, who even in the quick intimacies of prison life had found no place for themselves, we invited to our table. For once

invitations and other solemn formalities were to be taken seriously. For the first time after many months we sat down to a table with a table-cloth. The straw mattresses were arranged as divans to sit on. There was a sparkling Christmas-tree in the middle of the table. Zsiga Nagy, who apparently in his trade of ladies' tailor had learnt the art of conjuring showy illusions out of worthless trifles, had contrived it out of dry twigs off the poplar tree.

There was even a national note to the meal, for Moritz Stein had received some sweet pepper from home, and Schnitta, the refined-looking waiter, had succeeded in making a magnificent Hungarian stew.

The drink quickly had its effect on heads unused to alcohol. The strangest table-company I have ever seen soon relaxed all its stiffness, and in no time was singing the sad songs of Hungary in nostalgic ecstasy.

At the head of the table sat Müller. He wore a stiff collar, black tie, black coat and striped trousers, and held himself as stiffly in the garments as if they had been ironed onto him. The solemnity of garb changed not only him but all the others as well. At first we looked curiously, almost estrangedly, at the risen ghosts of our one-time social personalities. Fenyvesi was red as a lobster all the evening from the high, stiff collar he had on for the first time since Périgueux. I all but introduced myself to Neufeld when he appeared freshly shaven, in a dark-blue suit. Since the departure of the Budapest lawyer, Dudás, the flying man, was the dandy of us. He had put on one of the most magnificent creations out of his mighty travelling trunk for the occasion and was radiating a powerful smell of brilliantine. All the others were as I had first seen them, only thinner.

Only Rosenberg appeared in his overcoat, his tin pot hanging on his wrist. Next to him was Varga, looking like an elegant Member of Parliament condescending among his electors. They were well contented, for the toothless glass-blower Edward, in his capacity of Maravics' servant, counted

as a Hungarian and was sitting with them. To-night, things were to be the other way round: Maravics served Edward and I dumped a huge portion on Jacob's plate. Jacob had made himself very beautiful. Now he had his best clothes on we could see he was bow-legged, while in the same way Müller was shown to be knock-kneed and slightly hunch-backed.

On Müller's left and right the two head places were occupied according to age by Jacob and Demeter Bistrán. Even Bistrán had made some attempt to rise to the occasion. He had removed the superfluous hair from his pock-marked countenance, keeping only his long, pointed Hussar's moustaches. Moreover, out of some brown cast-off trousers of Németh's he had made himself a Hussar's forage-cap, the three buttons of which consisted of three bits of looking-glass, each smaller than the other. He said he saw the Present, Past and Future in them.

One could never tell from Bistrán's confused theories what he really felt about things. No one ever knew who his parents were or where he was born. Transylvania played a large part in his talk. He may possibly have been a Rumanian, though nothing was certain. He condemned the War utterly, and as far as could be gathered from his pronouncements he had more friendly feelings towards the French than the Germans. Now, as he got his present laid beside his plate and looked down the table with the twenty or more of us along it, he put his hand on my shoulder and according to his custom looked deep into my eyes.

'You, those schoolboys, those schoolboys in Budapest, how shall I say,' Brother Demeter began. 'So everything came from them? And for me, you understand, do you? Specially for me, Demeter Bistrán?'

I nodded.

Demeter only looked at me long and significantly and pulled and tweaked at his moustache.

'Really?' he said at last, after a long time. 'Really,

really . . .' he went on repeating. After that he said nothing for a long time, stared in front of himself and meditated.

Meanwhile I was making conversation with my other neighbour, Boromissza. He told me that since he came here his "wife" had been blessed once more. His twelfth child had been born. And he had decided that as soon as he was released he would without fail legalise his relations with his mistress.

Singing began and there was more noise. Korody and Jakuts, the two best singers, began to sing a carol. At that Brother Demeter jumped up from the table like a man who had found what he was looking for.

He put one of the coats hanging on the wall over his shoulders, took a stick in his hand and repeated the words the village children say when they go round with the "Bethlehem," then he lay down as the shepherds are supposed to do, and, leaning on his elbow, softly sang the Shepherds' Song. Then everybody joined in.

Only Müller did not sing. He twisted his big, bald, greenish-yellow head hither and thither to catch the words, for he had quite forgotten the text, and was dreadfully distressed at not being able to join in the chorus. For the first time in fifty years his forgotten community of race and blood and childish memories plucked at him. He, like Bistrán, considered his present as a personal attention. When the singing died down he got up and in broken Hungarian made a speech of thanks to the givers. Then he asked permission to recite the only Hungarian poem he could still remember and which he had learnt in his second year at the elementary school. The men laughed and shouted encouragement at the old man to do it.

Old Müller stood out in the middle of the room, pressed his broad, wrinkled palms to his thighs and in a queer, blurred falsetto began to recite an ancient and lengthy nursery rhyme. Sometimes he stuck, scratched his trousers in an agony of shyness, his mouth nearly twitching to weep-

ing, then started again, his face pallid with excitement, the sweat gathering on his big bald head. It was costing him a terrible effort of mind to struggle back through fifty years to the time when he still knew Hungarian. When he sat down the men patted him on the back, cheered him and made much of him all the rest of the evening.

Towards half-past eight the room filled with visitors from the other tables, and the noise grew and grew. We were singing all the German carols through too. There was such a noise that we never heard the "Lights Out" call, and the guard had to come up specially and put out the lamps. They left us in darkness, and everyone had to grope to his place.

I lay sleepless for hours on my mattress, thinking of other Christmases and people who had been there.

It was nearly midnight when heavy, regular steps came clumping up the winding, wooden stairs. The guard was coming back. Everyone sat up on his mattress. It was generally at night that they took away those who for disciplinary reasons were being sent to another camp.

Now they were in No. 5. The crack under our door lit up. Now they were opening the door to us. The lantern's beam cut the darkness. We were all lying back on our mattresses, trying to look as if we were asleep.

A strong, cold voice said my name. I sat up, my heart thumping, and even at that moment, when I was expecting some fatal news as to myself, I still could make-believe. I rubbed my eyes and stared stupidly at the soldier, as though I had been asleep.

'Put on your clothes and come to the sergeant.'

I pulled my clothes on, shivering. Where were they taking me this freezing cold night? All at once I did not want to leave the mattress, the dull-blue window behind me, the whole stuffy-aired room.

The soldiers took me between them and we set off. The door shut creaking behind us.

The sergeant lived in one of the not-collapsed tower-

rooms. We cut through the dark yard, and I went alone up the little stairway leading to the room. The soldiers stayed below.

I opened the door. Sergeant Guillaume, in a brown sweater and red trousers, was standing in the middle of the well-heated little room, and he smiled at me. Over the fire in the hearth was some good-smelling wine warming, with Georges kneeling by it.

Oh, here there could be nothing wrong! Guillaume came up to me and clapped me on the shoulder.

'You bought presents for those other poor devils. Now look here, I like that. I am a simple baker, and I have got a lot of children. And they can send me out to the front a dozen times, but I won't kill. I wanted to tell you this, and now let's have a glass of wine.'

Georges filled the glasses and we clinked and sipped at the sweet, hot drink. I stayed there more than an hour, and learned much from chance or half-said words.

There were going to be great changes after Christmas. Guillaume and Georges were being sent away. A new sergeant was coming, who understood the administration as well. There were going to be new regulations. As Guillaume put it:

'In short, they are going to stick notice-boards up all over this muckheap. This is allowed, that is not allowed. As if that was any good. I at any rate haven't interfered.'

We shook hands in good-bye. He said we were not likely to meet again. And what was to happen to him?

He waved his short arms expressively in the air. Who knows? But there was on his face the fear of the front.

That was what happened. It was his punishment for having himself photographed with the German schoolboys. Later we learnt that he was killed in his first days out there. He was leading his men to the attack; but he never used his weapon, and fell without a bullet missing from the revolver he clutched.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW ADMINISTRATOR

TOWARDS the middle of January the man arrived who tried to supervise our very dreams, ceaselessly watched us and had us watched, had our movements and words spied on, made whole sheaves of official correspondence by copying out letters we wrote or parts of letters we received and so robbed us of our only delight, the reading of our letters, for we felt all over every letter that came for us the filth of his prying gaze, the secretions of his morbid inquisitiveness.

His name was Ch——. For weeks we had heard terrible rumours of what was coming. It was said: A man of order, an iron-fisted man is coming.

He arrived on a Saturday. He was a tall, stout man, but he had something sneaking about him; a coward furtiveness in his eye. He did not in the least look like a man of iron. He was more the type of the eavesdropping police spy. That indeed was the official post he had held at the Prefecture. He had wriggled himself by his informing abilities into the good graces of the chief of the Department, the Prefect Tardif.

He wore red trousers and a blue tunic ornamented with a thin gold stripe on the shoulder. He was more than a sergeant and less than an officer, not at all a military type. His head narrowed towards the top, and his face puffed out towards the bottom. When he took off his cap there appeared a sticky, flabby-skinned countenance. He was very proud of this degenerate apparition, and, like every loud-mouthed French shirker, cursed the Germans for "square-heads." He never looked anyone in the face, not

even us, though we were completely at his mercy. That puffy face had no pronounced feature at all, only a sort of hidden, unacknowledged red tinge that came out in his scanty hair and even more in his thick, cropped moustache. He was red-haired, but he denied it; he was a coward, but he concealed it. He came to torment us, to crown our physical sufferings with choice spiritual tortures; but he did not do it openly, but kept up a petty fusillade against us under pretext of making order, of discipline, of hygiene, of orders received, of retaliation, *jeu de représailles*.

In twenty-four hours he succeeded in making us see him, feel him or suspect him everywhere. He populated our filthy dens with his cropped-moustached pear-head and his proudly carried paunch, as though his portrait had been hung up all over the place.

The "man of order" did not make any essential changes. The washing-troughs, the monthly barrel baths in the rat-infested cellar, the rain- and snow-soaked latrines, the crowded, lousy, bug-ridden rooms all remained unchanged. But he made it all harder to bear by sticking up everywhere notices of his orders. There was to be no smoking in the dank, stinking rooms. We were to get up punctually at eight o'clock in the morning. There was to be no going out into the tower court, and so on.

Added to these were the general orders that Ch—— had brought from the Prefecture. Apparently they were beginning to organise the till now impossible situation of the interned civilians on the principle of reprisals. The first such humane measure was to limit letter-writing to one a week, and that not to be of more than thirty-two lines. This was reprisals, though they might very well have known that the French caught in Hungary at the outbreak of the War were never interned for a moment; but that we had to swallow. They limited our letters, confiscated our parcels, forbade us this or that, always quoting reprisals, one of the moves in the infamous *jeu de représailles*.

However, among Administrator Ch——'s general regulations there were some which might have done us some good if he had not taken advantage of them for disciplinary ends. It was announced that we should go once a fortnight for walks under escort. Moreover, sand and gravel were brought to the yard and a path made where it was possible to walk on wet days. Later, Ch—— used both these things to punish us.

But he did one thing of real merit. He attempted to improve the food within its wretched limits. The beef once a week remained, but he forced the contractor to let us have better meat. He had more varied and better vegetables supplied. He livened up the eternal beans, lentils and turnips with potatoes, and even once procured us some macaroni.

Ch——'s appearance and activities naturally had the effect of disturbing the apathy into which we had slipped. Every moment we had to expect him or one of the corporals to arrive on the scene and make a fuss about something, for of the forty-two men in the room there was always someone who was violating one of the regulations. All day long the watchword was to be heard: "Here comes Fatty!" When he discovered what "Fatty" meant we changed the sign and knocked to each other or threw pebbles up from the yard.

Head in the air, hands behind his back, belly stuck out, the big soft man would come into the room, look at everything, pry into everything. If he was examining with pretended absorption the patches of mould, it meant he wanted to know what someone was writing, reading, working at, perhaps even thinking. He had eyes and nose in his fat back and in his brown-flecked neck. If he caught someone doing wrong he handed him straight over to his escort of soldiers.

But sometimes he said nothing, only planned a secret punishment for the offender. He held back a parcel from the man till the things in it were spoilt. He confiscated the man's correspondence without the victim's knowledge, not

giving out the letters addressed to him or not sending off the letters he wrote. That he only did in the case of men who frequently had letters and parcels from home. Then for weeks he would watch the effect and delight in the man's misery, hugging himself to see his half-crazy expectation.

In the afternoon he worked in his office. He moved from Sergeant Guillaume's romantic place down to a ground-floor room opposite the guard-house. It took a couple of days to put the room in order, and then he moved in with his files, portfolios, statistics and the plan of the various rooms. Here he felt himself safe; opposite were always soldiers, and the gate was handy for an escape.

In the afternoon he studied our letters and records for hours on end, gradually worming everything out about us. He discovered that the handsome, twirly-moustached Braggiotti was receiving money and love-letters from three Frenchwomen. He denounced the women to the Parisian police, who did something to them, for Braggiotti never received any more money or letters. He cut off Müller, too, from his love: the poor, half-witted old man nearly went clean off his head when he suddenly discovered that his Mademoiselle did not reply to his ardent letters: for he never knew they had not been sent. That work was finished towards evening, then the Administrator went once more through the rooms and so towards seven o'clock went off to the village. It was said that he there consumed wine with the *élite* of the community and recounted proudly how he had succeeded in disciplining the cursed Boches.

Several men from the nearer internment camps had been sent to Noirmoutier at the time of Ch——'s arrival. Among them were a few Hungarians: Bárczy and Weiffert, two boys from the Eötvös College, had been, like the German school-boys, on a study-tour when they were caught. The Eötvös College had certain connections with the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, and always sent out boys to study in France. Bárczy and Weiffert were allowed somewhat

privileged treatment, having been confined with a young bank clerk whose protectors in Paris had procured him some privileges at the Prefecture. The favour consisted of the bank clerk being allowed to put one of the top tower-rooms in order and move in there with the two boys. They read and worked all day, though the bank clerk spent all his time playing cards.

Then there came a Parisian acquaintance of mine, Imre Lakatos, who had been in a family camp and on that being dispersed was sent to us temporarily. Then there was Rubin, a bank official; Kílár, a noisy, good-humoured waiter who had been in America; Schneider, a Parisian baker originally from Pozsony; Szöke, a shoemaker; a young barber called Poss; Horváth, a cymbalum-player well known in the best places of amusement; and three more waiters, Ambrus, Bajusz and Kopolovits; and two brothers Weiner. That made the number of Hungarians up to thirty.

We had quite a big Hungarian table of evenings in the canteen. Madame Mignale sold her light red wine for six or seven sous the litre, and the food was correspondingly cheap. Sometimes she came and stood by our table to talk. She had a soft, musical voice, and if you did not look at her bent back, greying hair and plain features, but listened with shut eyes, there was a whole gentle melody in it. Occasionally she brought her little daughter, who would recite us the poetry she had learnt at school and show us the pictures the nuns had given her. Of course the Administrator had to poke his nose into the canteen and threaten the little woman with losing her livelihood if she talked with us.

A few Austrians were also sent to Noirmoutier as a consequence of the shuffling of accommodation on the mainland. A schoolmaster from Graz called Dr. Herz; two bank clerks, fat, good-tempered Reichsfeld and mild Ziffer, both Viennese; a young, good-looking, half-Austrian, half-Czech student called Seiffert; a musician with a forehead like Beethoven, Horovitz by name, who straightway organised an orchestra;

Crombeck, a watchmaker's assistant, who was an expert on every kind of string instrument; and a slim, powdered barber's assistant called Remling. Then there was an Austrian reservist officer whose arrival was quite a sensation. His wife was a Frenchwoman who had gone back to Austria. Popper and the others told terrible things of the rule of the Prefect Tardif, and of the fate of the camps under his jurisdiction: Sables d'Olonne, Luçon and Fontenay-le-Comte. The prisoners had been given stinking liver, bad meat and maggoty vegetables to eat, and when at one of the Prefect's visits they complained about it he said simply the Boches could rot for all he cared. Typhoid broke out in one of the family camps among the children. The doctor would have nothing to do with Boche brats. The Prefect took no steps. More than half the children died. A French mother had broken out of the camp and cursed France. It was then Popper's French wife decided to go "home" to Austria.

Such stories of course set us all ablaze again, and the rooms were loud with argument and abuse. There was tension enough as it was, for room had to be made to accommodate the new arrivals. And then to set the crown on the general bad temper it appeared that though everything was rotten in Sables d'Olonne and Luçon the sleeping-places had yet been better, there had been more freedom and on the whole the food had been better. In short, Noirmoutier was the worst camp of all.

The iron-fisted Ch—— had two or three disciplinary cases every day. He had to make two new one-man cells because the old ones proved insufficient. He had particular trouble with the dockers of No. 2, and with an Austrian, Schlitter by name, who called himself a house-painter. It was in his dealings with these men that it first became clear what a coward the iron-fisted Ch—— was. Schlitter threw his soup at the guard when they came to take him off to solitary confinement. He swore at the Administrator to his face in bad French without the latter daring to do anything about

it. Moreover, once in his cell, he took his clothes off, set light to them and sat stark naked warming his hands over the blaze because he said he could not stand the dank, mouldy cold. He locked the door of his prison from the inside. The guard only got at him by improvising a battering-ram out of some beams and banging away at the iron-bound door till they broke it in. Schlitter received them with a smile, a cigarette in his mouth, in Adamitic costume, warming his hands over the still glowing embers of his clothes. Ch—— did not know what to do with him. He found it best to tame the irrepressible one with fair words. First of all he gave him some clothes: that was the only time any of us received clothes from French official sources. Then he gave him a meal, and altogether treated him in the mildest of fashions. Schlitter enjoyed these advantages for two weeks, and then one night Ch—— pounced on him with his soldiers, handcuffed him and sent him over to the camp on Ile d'Yeu.

After that the excitement gradually subsided, though it was no credit to the Administrator's iron hand but to the rain beginning again and a long succession of grey days to reduce us to the old, gloomy apathy.

About the middle of February we went for our first walk. That amounted to a great event in Noirmoutier. Two rooms fell in in fours at ten o'clock in the morning by the gate. The inhabitants of the other rooms stood looking on enviously. Ch—— was marching agitatedly up and down giving orders. Four soldiers with fixed bayonets were put in front, four behind; a close file of soldiers guarded the sides. Bandits could not have been better guarded. And still the Administrator was not satisfied. He went on ordering out more and more armed forces till one of his stunted, bearded corporals had to inform him in a whisper that there would soon be none left to guard the fortress.

We started. The double gate swung open and a patch of

blue sky shone out in front of us, as though that were whither we were going. It was good to walk. Naturally we did not go through the village. By the church we turned into the road leading to the fields and woods towards the seashore. We could almost feel ourselves to be approaching warmer and milder country, for as we went on the grass became greener and thicker and the light breeze brought the smell of flowers, though at first we did not recognise that sweet narcotic and only drew it in greedily. We only realised that it was flowers and the scent of spring when we saw above the green of the trees the vague, yellow clouds of mimosa.

When we reached the wood we could hardly walk for the freshness and beauty of everything. A bright sky laughed down through the tracery of leaves, and in the smell of the wood were mingled the odour of dried leaves and the intoxicating, honey-sweet breath of the mimosa. And the whole wood was a-chatter with the singing of birds.

At one of the bends in the road there appeared a gentleman with a broad-brimmed hat, a clean-shaven face and an artist's bow, with behind him a child carrying a basket of fish. Seeing us, he raised his hat over high and made a calculated, stagy gesture towards us with his left hand.

'Good morning, sergeant, good morning, our prisoners!' he called towards us in a powerful voice. The words were like an aria, and round him the thousand-voiced, thousand-tinted Nature turned to a painted backcloth. We knew him for an actor at first sight, and we devoured him with our eyes, for it was a long time since we had seen a real civilian.

The old actor felt our concentration. He tried to say something.

'Well, and are you contented with your chief?' he asked, and pointed to the fat Administrator smirking beside us.

Of course we said yes.

At that the actor replied:

'Indeed, our poor children are not so treated in your country.'

The Administrator said indulgently:

'These men cannot help that.'

'I do not say they can,' agreed the actor. 'But when one day they are scattered abroad they will at least be able to tell of French generosity.'

That was a little too much. Popper burst in on the actor's soulful intonations from somewhere in the back row.

'Do you know what, Monsieur? In our countries, Austria and Hungary, the French are not even interned, and here we are treated like convicts!'

'Ah,' exclaimed the actor, and we thought he would be somewhat nonplussed. But no sign of it. He was a perfect representative of his race. He did not understand, could not imagine that this was meant as an insult. With infinite kindness he dodged the meaning of it, shrugged his shoulders and in the most natural manner in the world continued:

'Ah, yes, Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, that is another matter. Other peoples, other standpoints. . . .'

He would probably have gone on talking, but Ch—— hurried us on. He did not even answer the actor's salutation. The latter stood where he was, arms outstretched, smiling. Behind him the child with the basket of fish. We marched past him. Then we were away from him.

We arrived back at the fortress white and tired. We had not been there more than a few minutes when the news was already spreading: the Administrator had given orders that from now on the walks were to be along the dusty main road, where there was no prospect of our meeting anyone. So the walks became a drudgery, and hardly anyone ever presented himself for them after that.

The Administrator was bent on atoning for the damage done to his prestige by his encounter with the dockers and Schlitter.

One day he had trouble with Kopolovits, the Hungarian

waiter, and made such a scene out of it that it ended in the guard turning out. But, if anything, it damaged his authority even more.

Kopolovits had come to Noirmoutier after long and unpleasant adventures. In November, when the women and children of the family camp where he was confined were setting off for home, he broke out in the night, went to the railway station and crept under the seat of one of the carriages of the prisoners' train. He stayed cramped up in that hiding-place for four days without being noticed. At last, when they were already at the frontier, he could resist his hunger no longer, stuck his head out from under the seat and asked the Austrian-Czech women who were in the compartment for something to eat. They were very frightened, did not dare have him under the seat with their knowledge and gave him up to the police.

Then began Kopolovits' catabasis towards the Vendée and Noirmoutier. It took two months, from prison to prison, man-handling to man-handling.

When he arrived there was hardly anything left of him but skin and bone. His clothes hung on him in rags. His only whole piece of clothing was a pink shirt which a fellow-prisoner in Sables d'Olonne had given him. He was very proud of it.

Kopolovits was an optimist. He used to tell the story of his adventures as a joke, and had a store of tales from his life in Budapest. He had been night-waiter at a low coffee-house called the *Hazám*. According to him he spent his page-boy days among prostitutes. He spoke no language but his mother tongue. Somehow he had drifted to Paris, and before he could get a job the War broke out.

His clash with the Administrator began with the young Budapest bank clerk reporting him for swearing at him and threatening him with violence; they were playing cards at the time. Ch—— sent for Kopolovits, gave him a mighty dressing down and forbade him thenceforth to wait at table.

That punishment was typical of our Administrator. It was no affair of his that some of the men should club together to pay a waiter to wash their plates and eating things and receive for his trouble a few sous a week. Such a "job" was a purely private arrangement, and its real object was that the man concerned should be able to earn something. The performance of fatigues and such-like duties was the only way in which men who were neither tailors nor shoemakers nor barbers, and who received no material assistance from home, could earn a little money. Everyone needed a few sous to supplement his food, to buy tobacco and to provide himself with some underclothes; for to all that the authorities gave no thought. The Administrator forbade Kopolovits this source of income without it having anything to do with him.

Kopolovits said straight out in the office that he would not accept the punishment. He spoke German in the Jewish jargon of Budapest, of which Ch—— did not understand a word. So Edward, the toothless glass-blower, was sent for as interpreter. Edward transmitted Kopolovits' answer to the Administrator, whereupon that potentate flew into a mighty rage and declared Kopolovits should be locked up for two weeks.

At that Kopolovits said in German:

'Just you try it, you fat hog!'

'*Qu'est-ce qu'il dit?*' asked the Administrator furiously.

Edward scratched his head and interpreted:

'*Il ne désire point aller en prison.*'

This queer and none too exact translation had a continuation afterwards in the yard.

It was beautiful early spring sunshine. Everybody was outside when Kopolovits and Edward came out of the sergeant's room and went in the direction of the dining-room.

At the same moment the Administrator appeared at his door and yelled for the guard.

Everyone pricked up his ears at that voice.

Eight soldiers with fixed bayonets and a corporal fell in in front of the Administrator, who ordered them immediately to arrest Kopolovits.

Kopolovits had at that moment reached the wall of the keep, by the water-barrel. Here he waited quietly for the approaching guard. But when they surrounded him and made ready to hustle him off to the cells he wrenched himself away and squared up to them, waiting for them to come on.

A minute later a thick ring of prisoners was round the chief actors in the scene.

The Administrator had seen it all from afar, immediately called out the whole guard, armed, had the gate locked, and then with all his men made for the keep.

The soldiers, gripping their rifles, pushed and shouldered into the crowd, cleared a ring, and the Administrator marched in to admonish Kopolovits, telling him to go quietly before violence had to be used.

Kopolovits swore again in German and described the Administrator in most unflattering terms.

Again Edward was sent for. He did not know a word of Hungarian, but he gave a quick interpretation of the Hungarian expression meaning "fry in your own fat" by repeating the politer French formula of before: "*Il ne désire point aller en prison.*"

The scene with Edward interpreting and Kopolovits preparing for battle would have been ridiculous if it had not been so moving. The haggard, tattered waiter kept back the soldiers with a desperate truculence till they actually threatened him with their bayonets, and then he tore open his poor only pink shirt and struck his thin chest and cried in Hungarian:

'Shoot here, you cowardly swine! Shoot here, you swine!'

The Administrator wanted to know what he said, but Edward confessed he did not know this time: he must be talking Hebrew.

The Administrator could not have him bayoneted or shot,

and he stood there at a loss, till the little goat-bearded corporal, who had come only a few days before, but who had already won our liking, went up to Kopolovits and with quiet words disarmed him.

Kopolovits now knew a few words of French.

'*Avec vous, oui!*' he said, and allowed Corporal Bourasso to take him to the cells.

With ponderous strides, hands behind his back, Ch—— left the scene. After him went the guard, rifle in hand.

Suddenly a mighty laugh went up. Just as Kopolovits was disappearing through the door leading to the smaller yard he turned round and pulled a long nose at the Administrator.

Ch—— did not look round. He must have guessed what it was about.

CHAPTER VIII

SPRING

FOR days we had been scrubbing and whitewashing the rooms. We had stuffed the mattresses with fresh straw and sewed little loops on their ends so as to be able to hang them up in the daytime. The Administrator's supervision of us was closer than ever. He had idea after idea for conjuring order and habitableness out of the Black Monastery muck-heap. We could not imagine what could be the reason for all this energy. But soon the secret was out: there was a visitor coming. The chief warder was coming, the Prefect in person, and Ch—— wanted to show his achievements, the order and iron discipline of his rule. Every day he brought out some fresh order or other. The rooms were washed out with disinfectant, even the glorious latrines receiving a sprinkling.

Then one morning the preparations reached their zenith. On the Administrator's orders plates and knives and forks were laid out on the refectory table. At that everybody had to laugh. When the Administrator heard that laughter he left the room, furious, scarlet to the ears. The comedy was almost too much for him, too. 'From now on it will always be like this,' he remarked savagely, as he went out of the room.

At last, towards one o'clock, the great event happened. Between saluting files of soldiers the Prefect came in with his staff. His thin, shrunken face was almost overwhelmed by the big cap and the embracing fur of his collar. He was very much muffled up in spite of the mild spring weather. With him was a tall, bent-backed figure of a man with a long grey

moustache. He had a short coat on and a huge cap equipped with all sorts of buttonable accessories. They said he was some important American, brought here only out of curiosity. Behind them came the minor officials. But compared with the Administrator even they were mighty gentlemen, and he bowed deeply when he spoke to them.

The prisoners stood up, staring, where the procession passed. Saws and hammers stopped work, books were laid down, cards disappeared under the table. A few saluted, others looked at them without a word. Everyone had heard of the Prefect. He had had rotten liver given to the prisoners under his jurisdiction; the children had died like flies of typhoid without doctors or medicines. What did the highest departmental official of hate and evil want here? It was he who had sent us the Administrator, and he who had sent Guillaume to the front to be killed.

At two o'clock a soldier came to fetch me to appear before the Prefect. For a moment, in hopeful faith, I thought that the chief of the Department was going to give an answer to my petition. Perhaps I was even going to be allowed to live outside.

Of that, however, there was no word when I appeared before him in the sick-room, where he was holding court. He received me standing, his fur coat open, holding a sheet of paper in his thin, blue-veined hand.

'You are Aladar Kuncz?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Your father is headmaster of a school in Transylvania?'

'Yes.'

'Your father has addressed a complaint to the President of the Republic, that you are not receiving your money from home. I see from these accounts, however, that you have received the money.'

'Nothing came for three months. The complaint probably dates from that time.'

The Prefect made an impatient gesture.

'Write to your father,' he shouted at me in a hoarse, reedy voice, 'that in France they do not steal interned men's money!'

That was all. The Prefect's last words were directed more at the American than at me. The long, grey-moustached man nodded. He understood. . . . 'In your own country, on the other hand . . .' For sure the American also knew how in our country the French were interned.

A few minutes more and the visit was over. The Prefect and his following made for the gate. At the entrance he looked round once more, and his glance rested on us standing in stiff silence in the yard. The sudden spectacle of that silent, dull resistance seemed to stab to the heart even of that sick, pleasureless man. He shifted his glance from us, seemed to think, and at last beckoned to the sergeant and made a gesture like a coachman easing the reins a little.

'*Lâchez un peu,*' he said, and in spite of the distance we heard the words distinctly—'*Lâchez un peu!*'

The gate shut behind them and the soldiers ordered arms and began to talk with the men who had come up to them. Till then it had been forbidden for them to talk to us. And our dear old black dog, who had been brought back one day by the water fatigue as well as the water, was permitted to come in again and sniff round us with wagging tail.

The bugle-call to that festive day's soup cracked out merrily. The waiters arrived with steaming buckets of food. The sun shone out from behind the clouds. The whole glorious spring world repeated and echoed in its lights and sounds and scents—"*Lâchez un peu!*"

The wind was the soul of that mould-streaked old fortress. It squeezed through the cracks of doors and walls and floors to rush in a mad careering from cellar to attic, whistling, booming and howling. Century-old complaints that had lain hidden there rose suddenly to life, and it was as though in the wind's howling were mingled the shrieks of monks

under the nailed scourges, the last gasping cries of men strangled, the cursing petitions of prisoners desperately praying. At such times the only dreams were nightmares, and who was not overcome with weariness or the dream-magic of illusionary desires would leave the stinking dormitory where men sighed and groaned. If one of the heavy, iron-bound doors were opened the wind-flood hurled itself with shrieking laughter through, to rush breakneck down the narrow wooden stairs to the little court, or bound up towards the roof and there spread abroad in the form of thousands of scampering, squeaking rats.

I tried everything in vain, I could not sleep. I groped for my clogs, put on a coat and made for outside.

First I went into No. 5. The greenish moonlight was spread over the crowded, snoring, sighing, moaning sleepers. I passed through them, trying not to stumble over the clogs and boxes on the floor. From No. 5 I stole, clogs in hand, down the wooden stairs to the common ante-room. Since the new Administrator's coming a smoky lamp shed a scanty light over the room. Under the lamp was crouched the "Casino," reading. The brothers Weiner belonged to the unfailing night-readers. The elder one was so short-sighted that his eyes nearly touched the book he read. He would usually be reading some ancient work of alchemy or the work of an ultra-modern writer. He enjoyed both equally. His thin, shaven lips would twist to a radiant smile when he was poring over such things. Sight, however bad his eyes were, was the only sensual pleasure left to him, for he could hear even less than he saw; and taste and smell had nothing to practise on.

Prematurely aged, plagued by a malignant fate, he was yet hungry for every refinement and rarity of sensation. He had come to be interned only through the fact that at the beginning of August he had read in Geneva, where he was a watchmaker, that revolution had broken out in Paris. He thought he would go and see it, got into a train and ran straight into the arms of his captors.

He had met his younger brother in Paris. The younger Weiner was typically hook-nosed and pale-faced and spluttering when he talked. He studied chiefly sociological works. He was reading Marx now in the oil-lamp's miserly light.

Round the two Weiners sat Ambrus, the unquenchably earnest Hungarian waiter with the domed forehead, now memorising English words in a mumble, and Fritz, the guitar-playing Viennese waiter, who must have begun an exciting novel and could not bring himself to put it down. A few minutes earlier the athletic-framed Sedlar had been there too, but there had been a scene.

Two bruises on the younger Weiner's face bore witness to it. There had been no particular reason for the quarrel. Poor Weiner's typical nose bore all the responsibility. As Ambrus said, sometimes there was no standing that madman Sedlar. Some strange emotion seized him and he simply had to break something or fight someone.

The younger Weiner had already forgotten the matter. Marx was far more interesting than a black eye. The elder one greeted me with a smile and crooked his hand behind his ear. But it was no use shouting into this ear-trumpet, the wind's orchestra drowned my words. We only smiled and shook hands as if to indicate that otherwise we would have all kinds of pleasant things to say to each other.

I went towards the door.

At the bottom of the stone steps leading to the tower court a glowing cigarette showed that Bistrán, hopeless moon-lover, was still up. At such times what he was doing was to signal with his lighted cigarette, signals which according to him were seen by his brothers the seers in all quarters of the globe. Round him a furious gale was raging. Bistrán took no notice of it. He only puffed and puffed at his cigarette of quid-tobacco; sometimes a bluish flame flashed out, or red sparks flew from it. That was apparently all part of the signalling.

I had to cling to the wall as I walked against the hot wind raging between the towers. I could not go on walking for

long, but leant against the wall and long and greedily drew in the air that whirled past. A maddening, intoxicating scent of flowers filled my lungs. From where could the wind bring the smell of flowers and this summer heat?

The wide, starry sky looked down indifferent and aloof on the wind's play. A big full moon swam in the sky, full displayed in all its pale nakedness as though the whirlwind had stripped its covering from it. No sound of man or animal. Yet I felt an ominous nearness of something.

I must go on. I faced the wind again, though at the first step it tore open my coat and filled my jacket like a sail about me.

The narrow back end of the tower court was full-flooded by the moonlight. At one place the wall was fallen in, so that one could clamber up the piled stones to the parapet. Above and beyond the parapet was nothing but starry sky, a dizzy, tempting sea of radiance.

From the direction of the pile of stones came a groan, a muffled gasping. I looked. A naked figure was crawling up the stones, falling now on its knees, now on its elbows. Sometimes he flung back his massive neck, and his hair over his brow fell back over the back of his head and his teeth shone in the moonlight. Once he stood right up, flung his arms wide and thrust out his great chest.

It was Sedlar the quarrelsome. It seemed he was fighting a stronger enemy now than Weiner. He straightened up for a moment on the giddy height of the parapet and screamed into the whirlwind of the night, then in a blind, indifferent fury of self-torture he flung himself down again on the stones and slithered to the ground. He stood up again, panting and trembling, his body streaked with blood and sweat, and again began to climb, trying to stifle in pain his desires and the fevered demands of his blood. . . .

The first flowers came: *mignonette*, *forget-me-not* and

pansies. It began in a tiny recess in the yard between the walls of the refectory and the Administrator's little house. Next door to the dining-room a little shack had been built for two barbers, a German and an Austrian. It was the barbers who had thought of making a garden and had received seed for it from home, from the Swiss Red Cross, and, through Madame Mignale, from the village. A whole international flower-nursery was set up there.

Andor Németh and I came there early in the morning, squatted on our rickety wooden stools and read there all day: French, German, English and later Spanish books. We only obtained Hungarian books later.

We began with Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, reading it aloud in German. The grass and flowers round us were quite short then, but by the time we were reading *Don Quijote* the green was hedging us in luxuriously. How long it lasted? We did not very well know. The calendar did not count any more. Our imaginations achieved such complete, oblivious happiness in excursions in time and place that we were often quite freed from those hated surroundings of internment. Gradually this became no ordinary life nor mere reading. We became so utterly absorbed in the stuff we read that the world it brought us appeared much more vivid to us than our own; so much so that we came to fit our fellow-prisoners and all our surroundings into that imaginary world of ours.

If then the sun went down and in the thickening dusk reading became difficult, we would look at the world beyond the little garden, the sharpened outlines of the other men, the water-barrel, the little hut-shop in front of the canteen, as though that were a picture asserting itself suddenly before us, and for a little we felt only that it was oppressive and hateful without having had time to realise consciously why.

The tall, red-bearded German barber asked me if I would help him bring water from the well in front of the fortress to water the garden, and I agreed gladly. It meant a little

movement and escape from depression. Two of us took up a big wooden tub and the third brought the tin bucket with which to draw the water. The gate was half open. The guard did not bother now to give us an escort, for the well was only a few yards from the fortress.

A little path led down from the bridge to the well. This held nothing but stagnant water, only fit for washing or watering flowers. I wound up the long, rusty chain as though I were pulling up the burden of my existence; then I hooked on the bucket and set about drawing water. When the tub was full the two others lifted it by the lugs and took it into the fort. I still stayed by the well's mossy stone parapet, waiting till they should bring the empty tub back again.

The water shining at the bottom of that deep shaft had once reflected back the figures of black-robed monks; in that still evening brooding over the unpeopled road perhaps their memory was still guarded. To stand there hurt, maddened, as though it were only a step to fall out of Time, to strip off the form that life imposes. . . .

The sky was green-blue, with here and there a star twinkling out as though behind that infinitely soft, silk tissue the world of fire were hidden and pricked points of flame through the fine infinity of stuff. In front of the silent dignity of the church's twin towers were silhouetted the figures of two old women, standing turned towards each other. Perhaps they did not really talk, but had stood there motionless opposite each other for uncounted years.

No sound anywhere. It was only for a minute that I stood so, and then the others came back with the wet, blackly gleaming tub and startled me up; consciousness returned with frightened wing-beats as though from an infinite distance.

One afternoon in April two new internees arrived under escort at the gate of the fort of Noirmoutier. A big spring thunderstorm had just passed over us, still leaving grey sky

and drizzling clouds behind it. At such times the old castle did not at all look its best. Every dampness of the ancient building was apparent and the yard was suddenly swimming in mud. The dismal ghost of late autumn rose of a sudden.

The two new-comers stood luggage in hand by the guard-room while their escort handed over their papers to the corporal deputising for the Administrator. The corporal bellowed:

‘Monsieur Fenivezi!’

At the shout people gathered at the windows. I was at that moment in the barbers’ hut, and from the door had a good view of the gate. The German barber told me what I already knew, that new-comers were arriving.

I looked at them. I thought I knew the smaller one. His thin, pale face looked at me out of happier times, but I had no time to wonder from where, for the other man demanded all my attention. He was dressed in a double-breasted blue jacket and perfectly creased trousers; he had a light overcoat thrown over his arm and a leather suit-case in one hand. He looked as if he might be a Hungarian, as the first man must be.

The tall man rubbed his chin nervously and stared indignantly at the old, wet, weather-beaten keep building, as if that were not what he had expected. Short, thick-set Fenyvesi came paddling through the sea of mud in his enormous clogs towards the new arrivals. He had no collar on and his face was unshaven. His once fine grey trousers had two big differently coloured patches in them, and his blue coat was shiny, worn and shabby. His manner must have been curiously nervous for such a queerly attired figure.

Fenyvesi looked at their papers and exclaimed:

‘But you’re Hungarians!’

The tall, well-dressed, shaven, whiskered man, in whom there was something theatrical, said loudly:

‘My name is Oscar Zádory; I am a sculptor. Please give me a room looking out on the sea.’

I heard him distinctly from the door of the barbers' shop.

Fenyvesi was apparently in a bad temper, for he did not even smile. He only looked at the irreproachably dressed gentleman and then glanced back at the keep as though he were calculating how much time it would take that dank, unclean building to crush this confidence. Almost gently he asked only:

'Sir, what world do you come from?'

Zádory did not hear the sarcasm. He said drily that until then he had lived in Luçon under police supervision, but had not been interned. He had letters of introduction from Desbois, Rouchet, Brandt and any number of literary and artistic celebrities. That was why he had not been interned till now. He had been obliged to ask for his own internment because his life outside was made impossible; he was constantly threatened, and stones were thrown at him at night. He had asked to be interned on the condition that he were decently treated.

Fenyvesi remarked that that did not depend on him. But he would allot him a place in No. 5, which was comparatively the best-lit room. He would put the other man in the same room.

'What is your name?'

'Pesek.'

Now I remembered. He was a young bank clerk of Hungarian origin whom I had met once or twice in Paris in the years before the War. He had a friend called Jeanette who once caused great trouble by being taken out to a family *pension* in Nogent-sur-Marne, getting slightly tipsy there and behaving in not the most decorous of fashions. Another time I supped with them both in some *Chartier* or other, and that time she quarrelled with her friend and cried my shoulder all wet and smeared it all over with powder. The boy had grown thinner since then, and his old elegance had faded.

I exchanged a few words with him as I passed. He had come from another prison-camp, so had not lived at liberty as had Zádory. We shook hands and he ran after the other two. They had just reached the little door leading into the keep. The sculptor was explaining something agitatedly, for he threw his arms out and stopped. Fenyvesi, who had something to do, hurried him on. For a moment one might have thought the whole thing was mere politeness: the sculptor did not want to go first. But the scene was prolonged. Fenyvesi again touched him and invited him to go in.

The sculptor's arms spread still wider, still more despairingly. It seemed he could never pass through that door's narrow opening. Then suddenly they dropped, like broken wings. And the sculptor went forward, his head down. After him went Fenyvesi and Pesek.

Zádory was put in No. 5, between the sore-stricken Boromissza and Edward the glass-blower. When Edward became Maravics' servant, secretary and buffoon he had had after all to abandon his old friends, Varga and Rosenberg, and find room for himself in No. 5, where he was at hand for Maravics' tower-room.

The sculptor, when he was shown his place—so they said—spoke no word to anyone. He lay down fully dressed on the straw mattress, put his suit-case under his head and drew his overcoat over himself. So he lay for two days, with his eyes open and his hands clasped on his chest. When they offered him food he refused it with the choicest expressions of Parisian argot.

But that attitude only lasted two days. After that he became all the noisier and livelier. My fiction-populated imagination ranged him now among the figures of Dickens, now of Dostojevsky. It was as though the fresh, blustering spring had borrowed clothes from Dickens' figures and had

stolen Dostojevsky's vocabulary and had come to stir up our stagnant lives.

We learnt that eight or ten years before Zádory had set off from Nagyvárad, where he studied sculpture, on foot, had suddenly burst on Paris and after all sorts of adventures eventually arrived in Rodin's studio.

Zádory was a wonderful story-teller. He could display his life in a welter of epic magnificence, till our little lives, now peeping out partwise, shyly, in moments of intimacy, were suddenly pushed into the background, dwarfed to nothing before his soaring adventures. When he joined us our table in the canteen became loud with argument, Zádory telling us all about himself and sketching with the same epic exaggeration the people who had played a part in his life: old Desbois, who according to Zádory was the heir to Rodin's throne; Zádory's mistress, whom we had to call familiarly Mastic; and then some manufacturer or other called Brandt, who populated the world with bronze *objets d'art* for which Zádory and fourteen other sculptors prepared the models in Paris.

Desbois, Mastic and Brandt! But that was nothing. These figures of his past became our friends. And just as we had them forced on us with his violent vividness, so we had to declare ourselves at one with all his ideas and theories about the War and art and the characteristics of the French and the Hungarians, or find ourselves engaged in furious quarrel with him, towards the end of which he shrank from no personalities, nor from inciting his audience against the enemy to convince himself that he had flattened all opposition.

To begin with, I was interested in him and later grew to like him. He was good for depression. There was much pose and affectation and cheap rhetoric in him, but it was clear that his artistic ability and his vitality set up a very real resistance to the apathy of prison existence. He had the will not to sink into the slough, though his foot touched the marsh a hundred times. Moreover, to everything, even to

the hopeless horizon of prison life, he could find significance on the plain of artistic vision, had a new elucidation for it all, could span it with great far-flung arches. The Black Monastery was for him a huge store of unworked material out of which splendid visions were to be conjured.

This devil of fantasy was no play-acting in him, though it is true he often tried to imitate himself and then said things worthy of the mouth of a tenth-rate ranter. Once it would be the galloping rush of Hunnish hordes that he saw in the stones of the fallen-in wall; or his foot stumbled over a piece of bone in the yard, he picked it up and saw in it his adored Mastic's smile and voluptuously swelling bosom. But the bone remained in his hand, and out of it with a mere pen-knife and a little wooden mallet he actually carved in bewitching miniature the smiling face and alluring bust of Mastic.

To such a vision was due the tombstone he made for Jungblut, and which unfortunately never came to be set up.

Zádory had made friends with his colleague Von Bergen on the very first day. Von Bergen had once made some little wooden statuettes for the Administrator for nothing, and had received in return a special corner of the yard, cut off by a wall, where he could carve away at the miniatures of his Russian mistress in peace. He invited Zádory to visit him, and after that they worked together in their little compartment. It had the advantage that a window of one of the rooms of the canteen opened onto it, and through this, if it were open, the ever thirsty Von Bergen could purloin a couple of litres of red wine. Once for lack of a bottle the German sculptor climbed in himself, lay down under the tap and there got so drunk that Zádory had to go in after him and fetch him out. Fortunately it happened in the afternoon and no one came into the canteen.

It can well be imagined what this place meant to the German sculptor and what it meant for him to share it with Zádory, who was equally fond of the drink. The Hungarian

showed his gratitude, however, by teaching his friend new and much simpler positions for his statuettes, for till then he had always made kneeling figures. Among others he showed him a forward-drooping female nude which could be cut with a few strokes of the chisel and had the added advantage of being especially effective in throwing the lewder parts of the female body into prominence. The new model produced a fresh demand for the Von Bergen miniatures. Biesenbach, Von Bergen's agent, sold the first drooping figure among the men in ten minutes and returned with three more orders to clap the artist on the back in gleeful congratulation. Von Bergen began to be popular again.

Zádory found a biggish stone among the half-collapsed side of the sculptor's "studio," and swore he saw a Christ-face in it. On an impulse I asked him to carve it, if he saw it so vividly. The stone was a fit size for a gravestone, and it would be worth a good deal to us to mark poor Jungblut's abandoned grave in the cemetery of Noirmoutier.

Zádory was pleased with the idea, took the big stone in hand and in a few days I could see that his vision had been real; a radiant Christ-face was growing out of the rough stone. The work promised so well that Von Bergen abandoned his manufacture of drooping women and helped Zádory, who did the carving with bits of rusty iron. They only cut away just enough of the stone to indicate the face in relief, and underneath it they inscribed the name—Jungblut.

The work took three or four weeks. At dusk the men collected to admire it, and once even the Administrator condescended to inspect the memorial. After that he repeated his visit several times. Therewith the peace and treasured remoteness of the little separate place was lost.

Zádory and I racked our brains for a long time for something to inscribe on the stone that should indicate what were the circumstances of its conception. It could not be in German and we would not write it in French. Eventually we decided on Latin, and at my suggestion Zádory engraved

the following text under the name and the date: *Pro gladio vinculum obtenuit*. That could be translated—"Instead of a sword he received fetters," which would have referred to the fact that the man who had spent all his life soldiering was imprisoned just at the time when everybody was turning soldier. But it could also be taken as "In exchange for his sword he received fetters"—an open impeachment of the French for imprisoning the one-time legionary in their own cause.

Ch——, at any rate, was very perplexed by the line when he saw it on the occasion of one of his visits. He had it translated to him, copied down the Latin words and sent them in to the Prefecture. We of course gave him the more peaceable explanation.

His correspondence with the Prefecture lasted for weeks; a Latin expert was called in. And then at last one afternoon the Administrator appeared in the sculptors' "studio." I happened to be there at the time.

The work stood completed. The Christ-face looked down in Heavenly serenity on Jungblut's haloed name and the mysterious Latin inscription.

The Administrator pointed to the inscription.

'That Latin sentence must be scratched out from there. Orders from the Prefecture.'

Zádory shook his head.

'I won't scratch it out.'

'Then perhaps Monsieur de Bergen?'

"Monsieur de Bergen" with the same firmness announced:

'I won't do it either.'

'In that case,' remarked the Administrator, 'we will not set up the memorial.'

'To the glory of the democratic French Republic,' added Zádory.

The Administrator furiously forbade Zádory to mock glorious France.

At that Zádory stood up on the little rickety stool and said

some terrible things to the Administrator. He began by saying that he was confined in the company of rats and mice and lice and bugs. He was treated like a thief, though he had worked for ten years in the cause of French applied art. He accused the Administrator of stealing his letters, in which he had said openly into what *merde* he had been thrown and what swine and scoundrels were in charge of him. But that would not last long, anyway! The Germans were now annihilating Russia; let the Administrator only just wait, and in spite of Italy being traitor it would not be more than a matter of months before the whole German army came back here, and then the French would get what they deserved! Especially such swaggering, blustering cowards as the Administrator.

The Administrator was speechless before that outbreak of rage and bitterness. Von Bergen and I were frozen to silence. What would happen now?

At last the Administrator forced a sarcastic smile and said only:

‘Yes, Monsieur Zádory? Is that so? I shall see to it that what you have said shall be known in higher quarters.’

With that he turned on his heel and went off, banging the door behind him.

‘Dirty sneak!’ shouted Zádory after him.

The affair had a continuation that afternoon. Two soldiers with fixed bayonets appeared at the sculptors’ “studio” and ordered us to remove ourselves. Then with a mighty, rusty key they locked the door.

The gravestone lay for weeks in the abandoned little place. We could see it dimly through the cracks.

Then one day it had been overturned, perhaps by the Administrator’s orders. And in autumn, when the coal for the kitchen in winter was brought, the whole heap was dumped on the gravestone. The Christ-face disappeared from our sight once and for all, sinking more and more into the ground.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMER IDYLLS

IN those summer months the grimy fortress was like a vast upturned stone under which the air and sunshine suddenly intruding stir worms and shiny-backed beetles and grubs to a startled writhing. A great cleaning reigned in the *chambrées*. Mattresses, coloured, tattered rugs, trunks, were all brought out into the sunshine. Ropes and wires were strung between two walls of the yard and the carefully treasured best clothes and overcoats were hung out. The steady, generous sunshine had a great quantity of dirt and dust and earthy-smelling damp to drink up. It was only now we saw in what filth we had been living, and yet we wandered about homelessly and restlessly because the corners into which we had been accustomed to crawl were being turned out.

Everybody was wandering aimlessly up and down, dodging the things hung out and the buckets of hot scrubbing-water descending from the rooms, and quarrelling bad-temperedly. Maravics, Dudás and Lakatos were standing together and arguing, I think, about whether the War could have been avoided. Von Bergen, Zádory and Willersdorfer were throwing sous at the base of the wall of the sculptors' yard. Who threw nearest, won. The two sculptors, by the way, ever since the incident with the Administrator, were expecting any moment to have Ch——'s revenge whisk them off to another prison-camp. Besides that Von Bergen had another trouble. He had had no letter from the Russian girl for weeks. At first he thought the Administrator's finger was in the business. So he tried sending his letters

secretly through the soldiers. Every letter cost him one of his statuettes. He still had no answer. At last he went to see the Administrator, and, big and grey-haired and with all that life behind him, he knelt down before the man and begged him to procure him news. The Administrator promised to do all he could, and kept his word. A week later came the report from the Parisian police: the Russian girl had left Paris, destination unknown. That was the crown of the German sculptor's tragedy. He was left terribly alone in the world, so alone that he could not count among men. Of the many bits of human flotsam in the Black Monastery he was the only one who was linked by one thread alone to the community of mankind, and now, it seemed, that too had broken.

It was not easy to acquiesce in that aimless, barbarian confinement now. Outside was the sea and the freshness of woods and the scent of turf. It would have been easy enough to set apart a stretch of land where no one ever went and tell us to build ourselves huts there: we could not have escaped in any case. Instead of that they locked us up like convicts. They crowded us into foul-smelling, bug-ridden holes. They put us at the mercy of a fat, sick-brained, tyrannical sadist, that he should have his pleasure by our suffering. They locked us away from women: it is a wonder they did not castrate us into the bargain, though that would perhaps have been humaner. Hung out by Jacob Vantur's care on one of the strung ropes was the queer chronicle of the last year of my life, from the white summer things of that time at the Breton bathing-place to the blue sweater and big brown muffler and all the winter things that bore the stamp of prison.

The great cleaning went on all day. Five or six men scrubbed in the rooms. The floors were dry by the afternoon, and then the moving-in began, of course not without disputation. The opportunists tried to take in a couple of inches more for themselves and the persecution maniacs

shrieked their complaints that their places had been stolen, even if they had received their old measure back again. Out of the open windows of the keep poured the din of furious dispute, till Schneider, the baker from Pozsony, sounded the call to the *soupe*. The waiters crossed the yard with the big tin tub, a good smell of bean soup rising from it. Generally everybody ate bean soup, and the canteen did bad business. The more prosperous men brought sausage to slice into it.

The *soupe* was eaten in detachments, for there was not room for everyone in the dining-room at once. While one party was eating, the others would stroll up and down the Ch—— Chaussée (as they called the part of the yard that Ch—— had had gravelled) or stand waiting, plate in hand, till the first detachment had finished.

Among the promenaders I met Bistrán, his pock-marked face all a-grin, brandishing a half-litre bottle of wine in greeting. He must have earned a lot that day doing other people's work of cleaning. Old Müller was strolling up and down in his green apron, with a whole court round him; little Moritz Stein of the bicycling-cap, Korody, with his hat still adorned by a tuft of horse-hair such as the country blades of Hungary used to wear, Zsiga Nagy the ladies' tailor, Feldenczer and a lot more. The dockers were walking arm-in-arm five or six abreast, laughing uproariously at everything, thinking probably of old promenades when they went off in some port to look for nocturnal adventure.

That was a queer Corso. The provincial town's earnest promenading cheek by jowl with the vagabonding of a capital's slums. Reisner, who had come from Sables d'Olonne at the same time as Bárczy, and who had since then grown a big black beard, saluted me as punctiliously as though he were meeting one of his colleagues at his old commercial college. The two Weiners were walking together, the younger one shouting sociology into the elder one's ear, the latter pretending not to understand. He was

not in the least interested in sociology. . . . The Austrian waiters now as ever together, the white-shirted Tirolese Adonis conspicuous among them, walking arm-in-arm with pale Fritz, the pair of them looking like rustic lovers. The crowd of walkers grew bigger and the buzz of talking grew louder and louder. At moments one could genuinely, undisturbedly believe that it was true, some town's Corso where the electric light had gone out. . . . Only everyone was bareheaded and everyone, however serious and however genuine a promenader, had a plate in his hand. That was uncanny to see, as though you were in a madhouse, where the patients played at Corso. . . .

Before going in to supper I wanted to go up to Fenyvesi's tower-room to discuss with him when I was to move in there. I went through Room 3. On the left of the door to the tower-room there was a candle burning, and by its light I saw two figures sitting on low chairs. They must just have finished some dispute when I came in, for they looked straight in front of them in some confusion. For the first moment I did not recognise them. I was accustomed to the fact that every time I passed there should be a place separated off by a patterned curtain, behind which it was impossible to see those who lived there. Now the curtain was lying thrown aside. The corner was displayed in all its dismal nakedness just as in any other room. There were no pictures on the wall, the mattresses were not yet stacked.

The two inseparables must have quarrelled while putting the place in order again: Dr. Herz, the schoolmaster from Lower Austria, and his young Czech friend, Jeroslav Seiffert.

I was on book-lending terms with Dr. Herz and had been invited once or twice to have coffee with him. He had really arranged the corner where he lived with the young Czech very cleverly. The two of them had no more room than anybody else, but in the daytime they stacked their mattresses one on the top of the other and put a table in front of them; books and crockery were on an improvised shelf

on the wall; pictures all round; and a light curtain cut them off on the side of the rest of the room and shut in their sleeping-places.

Dr. Herz was a blond, prematurely bald man of about thirty-eight. His face was at first sight somewhat repulsive. It had an indefinable sweetish expression, an affected childishness which suited that oldish, remarkably ugly man badly. But his kindness and friendliness quickly disarmed one. He had travelled a great deal and could tell of interesting things.

His friend the young Czech was a good-looking, cunning-faced boy. The other men used to exercise their wit to a considerable extent on the relation connecting him with the Austrian schoolmaster. The boy took great advantage of his elder friend's indulgence. The latter cooked for him, sewed for him and washed for him. He cared for him like a mother; and in return Jeroslav did nothing but jibe at him and threaten him with leaving internment to join the Czech legion.

Dr. Herz had complained of this to me, adding that the boy's faithlessness hurt him very much, for he felt like a father towards him. Moreover, as he said, the boy was of Austrian origin and the name Jeroslav had stuck to him only because he was christened in a Czech village and his father had not bothered to see what name was given to him.

Dr. Herz, seeing me, sighed bitterly: 'Ah, Herr Colleague . . .' I could imagine that the trouble was again about the Czech legion. He made me sit down on a mattress. Then he complained that the boy had said it was not worth putting up the curtain again because in any case he was not going to stay there long.

'That cursed Czech legion again. . . . He wants to go. . . .'

My colleague took the rose-patterned curtain on his knees and began sewing again, first licking his cotton and then neatly threading his needle. I noticed he had a yellow thimble on his finger.

It was quite queer to watch that bald, ageing man. He

seemed quite changed when he sewed. Sometimes he broke the thread with his teeth, or smoothed his stitches with a finger, and all the time while he was telling me his woes he kept looking at Jeroslav and smiling. When he smiled his white teeth shone and little dimples appeared round his lips.

Oh yes, it was possible there were perverted motherly feelings in the man, but what the other men whispered about him could not be true. He needed this Jeroslav as someone on whom to lavish his affection, of which the soft, woman-hearted man had certainly a great deal. And Jeroslav was really a nice, likeable enough lad; like some schoolboy.

I of course hastened to the help of Dr. Herz and also tried to dissuade Jeroslav from joining the Czech legion. The boy meanwhile had mounted the mattress on which I was sitting and lain down along it behind me. Just as I was in the middle of my talk he suddenly put his hand up and stroked the back of my head.

I looked round with a start. The boy's face was in shadow, only his white teeth shone from his half-opened mouth, and, his eyes gleaming with a strange light under his long eyelashes, he looked a shameless challenge at me.

I got up, frightened. At that moment the man sewing at his rose-patterned curtain had become like some horrible woman-spectre. And the boy's look burned me and made me sick. . . .

I took an awkward leave of them, and for days after that I did not dare to look at the rose-patterned curtain, now again screening the corner as a sign that peace was declared again and Jeroslav had for the moment renounced his intention of offering his life for the victory of Czech nationalist ideals.

Of the men's summer entertainments the skittle-alley had the greatest success. It is true that its foundation was due to such wily men of business as Jacob Vantur on the one hand

and Biesenbach and Von der Hohe, the two German agents, on the other. The undertaking had a modest beginning. Jacob had simply set a plank in the ground not far from the poplar tree, and then had carved out some balls and nine very primitive skittles. That was the first skittle-alley. But when he saw what popularity this alley achieved, for all its primitive equipment, especially among the eternally lounging German dockers and the Tirolese masons and gypsies, he opened negotiations with the two agents. Soon afterwards they placed orders for more balls and skittles with Varga the joiner and a couple more Tirolese workmen who knew something about wood-carving.

When those new balls were ready, play never stopped in the alley from morning till night. At first Jacob set up the skittles himself, but, business growing brisk, he appointed Demeter Bistrán in his stead. No work for a prophet, indeed, setting up skittles. Demeter behaved like a Son of God incognito when the German dockers cursed him savagely for allowing the ball to bounce back, or for not being quick enough in throwing back one of the crack players' favourite ball. He obeyed in silence, doubtless secure in the knowledge that this base occupation was only temporary and that the great compensation was to come in the end. Meanwhile he earned daily at least enough for a litre, of which he was allowed to consume only half, careful Jacob Vantur putting away the rest for him against winter, when it would not be so easy to earn money.

At the skittle-alley there appeared all kinds of new personalities who till then had lived in obscurity, doubtless waiting for this noble and specialised game to reveal their talents.

The best players were two of the German dockers. Their names were Max and Markus. They both wore the same sort of brown canvas clothes and blue cloth peaked caps. Max was flax-blond and thin, Markus black-haired, black-moustached and heavily built. They used to have bets on a particularly difficult skittle. They both bragged and

exaggerated and made a great deal of noise before they bowled. The money for the litre of wine had to be put down beforehand. The money counters were as follows: one sou, a red counter; two sous, a yellow counter; and half a franc, a grey one. The price of one litre of wine was three yellow counters. They would each lay down the stakes, and Jacob changed the six yellow counters for one grey and one yellow.

Max bowled first. He favoured the little ball, reaching well behind him for the throw and then throwing without bending at all and with a little hop in the air. If he hit the mark he never made a great deal of fuss, but straightened even more. If he missed, he poured curses on the alley and had old Jacob brush the whole length of the pitch so that any stone that had deflected his ball should not spoil his friend's luck. Max was a very generous opponent.

Markus waved aside such attentions. He was quite another personality. He would take up the biggest ball and weigh it a few moments in both hands, watching all the time the skittle he was aiming for as though he wanted to put a spell on it. His little drink-reddened nose dilated with excitement, as though he were sniffing in anticipation at the wine which was staked.

Markus was one of the ponderous sort of players. His ball trundled slowly and fatly along, once or twice even making little detours, but usually ending by bowling over its destined victim. If the skittle fell, Bistrán made straight for Markus. The yellow counter, as he knew, was his *pourboire*. (The word was to be taken literally in Bistrán's case.)

Max, Markus and such-like professionals played in the morning. They were nearly in a championship category. Von Bergen, who had an eagle eye, was also of their number. Willersdorfer was good too, and, of the Hungarians, Weiffert. But they preferred to play in the afternoons, when the play was less serious and there was often an audience of thirty or forty men, more especially when Moritz Stein arranged a

tournament. The little, black-haired, childish-faced Hungarian tanner was very popular and could persuade many men to enter who had never touched a ball in their lives.

The Czech boy spent the whole day with the skittlers. It was unfortunate, for he very quickly went to the bad in that company. As long as he had remained with Dr. Herz he had read and studied a good deal, for Dr. Herz wanted to make something out of him. The skittle-alley, however, drove the boy completely wild, and Dr. Herz had to renounce his ambitions.

Several times a day the Austrian schoolmaster would be seen sticking his sad, bald head out of the window of No. 3 and calling down to the yard:

‘Jeroslav, Jeroslav! *Wo bist du schon wieder?*’

Jeroslav did not answer. The skittle-alley was hidden by the poplar tree and the blankets hung out to air on wires in the yard. Moreover, the skittlers were making a great deal of noise. Max had a most penetrating voice, and did not spare it. The others were just as noisy.

Jeroslav flattened himself behind one of the blankets.

‘Jeroslav, Jeroslav!’ came the despairing voice again.

Von Bergen had noticed it. He hated the Austrian schoolmaster because although he had some money he never bought any of his miniature women, and had even announced that he considered such things “immoral muck.” The German sculptor peeped out from behind the blankets, and when Jeroslav’s name sounded again he too began to call in a womanly falsetto of his hoarse drunkard’s voice.

That set the sailors and dockers off on a competition of calling Jeroslav’s name in a variety of shrillness. It was curious that the men all called in feminine tones, whereas the Austrian teacher had quite a normal man’s voice. All the time the Czech boy would stand there among them, shrieking with laughter.

The scene was repeated several times, but in the end Dr. Herz saw there was nothing to be done. The boy was not

to be saved. He did not turn him out of their curtained compartment, but he simply ignored him. He went on darning the boy's stockings and mending his linen and even on occasion letting him share the food, but he never broke the speech boycott. Jeroslav remained air to Dr. Herz.

The lad profited from this era of disfavour to run off to his sailor friends even at night, there to be regaled with smuggled rum, and to be given foul-smelling shag to smoke. The boy would come back from these Bacchanalian feasts of some cellar-den pale and staggering and tousled and often with his clothes in disorder, and however cautiously he tried to slip in through the rose-patterned curtain Dr. Herz heard him, and just when the boy believed he had succeeded in creeping back unremarked his tutor would throw off his blanket, dress and go down into the yard.

Down below the reddening sky received him, the birds were singing, a scented, salt-tanged breeze came from the direction of the sea.

The skittle-alley, origin of all his bitterness, lay before him silently. Dr. Herz went up to it, looked round to see that no one was watching him and then spat furiously on the smooth-polished plank. . . .

That, at least, was the story told next day at the skittle-alley by Max, who had come out of the door leading to the smaller yard just as this scene was being played.

But soon even Dr. Herz found an amusement in which he could seek oblivion. "Meine-deine" was just then beginning to be a perfect disease in the Black Monastery. It was a dangerous card-game, for many players, and curiously enough the Administrator never forbade it. It is true that the players made a point of retreating to the remotest corners of the yard or to the refectory, but the Administrator, who was everywhere and saw and heard everything, knew very well of the craze. Probably the reason for his not interfering was that the bankers were among the most inveterate and truculent of the brawlers.

Alfred was one of them. Everybody called him that, his surname having long ago fallen into disuse. He could speak nothing but French now, but being of Austrian origin he had been interned like the rest. At the outbreak of war Alfred was just finishing doing "time" for something or other. He was taken out of prison in the summer of 1915 and sent straight to us. He was a thick-necked, big-chested, deep-voiced fellow. He wore a striped sports vest, and the muscles of his arms swelled dangerously when he held the bank. It was very difficult for any unlucky player to sustain an opinion contrary to his.

As partners he had chosen the mighty Austrian waiter, Sedlar, and another acrobatic gentleman of equally uncertain nationality, whom everybody called "Sixpence." It was always a secret from whom these three obtained the money with which to finance the bank, and with whom they shared the profits. Some people said the money came from the Austrian waiters employed in the kitchen, while others suspected Jacob. This last was improbable, however, because the "Meine-deine" soon became a serious rival to the skittle-alley.

Play began quite early in the morning. A big table was covered with a blanket on which eight squares were marked out in white cotton. The upper part was for the high cards, from the knave to the ace, below that the four numbers. Anyone putting something on threw his coloured counter on the square of his choice. You could win back your money doubled. When the blanket was full of red, yellow, grey and even purple counters (the last were the one-franc ones) the game began. Of the three athletes one dealt, the second paid out or raked in the money and the third kept "order." Cards dealt to the left were the bank's, those to the right the players'. Sometimes it happened that four aces were dealt to the bank, or four aces to the players. Most of the men re-staked their winnings: that was all in favour of the bank if the cards did not come out in a series.

All three bankers were card-sharpers of the first water. Alfred once gave me an exhibition of his skill. He dealt just as I told him to: four aces to the bank, four sevens to the player, the kings alternately, the first two queens to the player, the last two to the bank. I set him a fairly complicated task. Yet after a couple of minutes' shuffling he did it exactly, and I never noticed when he cheated.

For all the bankers' probity was not one hundred per cent guaranteed, there was always a crowd round the gaming-table. It is true that the deal was generally made before the stakes were made. But I often saw how even after the stakes were laid down Alfred or one of the other two would find some pretext for further dealing. The bankers were not magicians, anyway, and when there were forty or fifty stakes on the table they could not always turn the deal in their favour at short notice, so that the players had to win often enough. On the whole, however, the bank did well.

Dr. Herz was also caught by the card-playing passion. It was a drug and a distraction just suited to him. He sat for hours and days at the table, clutching the coloured counters in his hand, paying out or raking in his winnings. He gradually became an unthinking machine; he and the other players in general. There were few there who came only to win enough to buy some sausage or bread, or a drink. Most of them had become complete slaves to the game. They had found a distraction that took them out of their beastly surroundings, let them forget their cares and pains and brought them to a very simple, mechanical world where everything depended on whether the card fell to the right or to the left.

Monsieur Riedl, sometime manager of one of the big Parisian hotels, who before that had been used to lose a great deal on horse-racing and then in the mobilisation looting in Paris had been robbed more or less of everything, likewise sat down at the table and began to play. Till then he had done nothing but walk up and down in the rooms and the yard. It did not look as if he even sat down to meals. He

used to run up and down all day, and sometimes in the night as well, till he collapsed. Now at last he stopped by the gaming-table. His veiled eyes lit up again, and sometimes a flush ran across his pallid, flabby face. He set to pursuing luck again, as he had done at the race-meetings. Then he had staked fortunes; now he staked bits of coloured paper; but in both cases with the same passion.

There came to the table some of the Germans of whom one would never have believed that they had any money at all, and they set to playing for stakes of fifty or sixty francs. There was one of them, a once fat, now somewhat collapsed sort of mechanic in a brown corduroy coat, who smelt abominably. He would produce the cardboard counters which served for money from the most varied hiding-places of his filthy, stained old jacket, and once he squeezed two gold coins out of himself, which made everybody stare, for it was strictly forbidden to have any gold hidden. The next day, sure enough, the soldiers searched him, ransacked his sleeping-place, but found no more gold. The mechanic with the brown corduroy coat remarked at the gambling-table that it was not enough for a sneak to inform, he must have good eyes as well.

‘Now, sneak, where did I get this gold from?’ the mechanic leered and chuckled, twisting a gleaming coin between his dirty fingers. ‘To-morrow tell you dear Administrator about this, too.’

No one knew to whom this was addressed. There must have been about thirty of us at the table, and the mechanic squinted so abominably through his spectacles, fastened to his ears by a many-knotted black string, that it was impossible to tell whom he had his eye on.

But the game began. Sedlar dealt, “Sixpence” paid and Alfred kept order. It was just as well to watch “Sixpence’s” hand, for he had an infinite ingenuity in brushing the money over from the winning side to the losing square.

Among the regular players was of course Kopolovits. He

had kept his position as waiter, and had earned so much that he had bought a suit off me and some underclothes from Dudás.

Sometimes the players gathered in the refectory after the evening *soupe* and played on by the light of a candle till it was time to go to bed, which in the summer months was not till nine o'clock.

The 'cello which Von Bergen made for me was finished then, and the accessories to it I obtained from Nantes through the proprietress of the canteen. I had to learn the fingering all over again, because the distances were wrong. But I gradually grew used to that. There was so much need in me that I think I could have conjured music out of a stick. The gypsy Horváth became my usual accompanist. It is true he was a cymbalum-player, but he had learnt the violin in internment. He could accompany me on his poor instrument with much the effect of the cymbalum. Later he made himself a xylophone out of odd pieces of wood.

Our duet of evenings was quite a strange experience. We played all sorts of things on those two wretched little instruments, town, country, loving, hating, fighting. Often we had an audience of twenty or more crowded into Fenyvesi's tower-room. They lay on the floor or on mattresses, and listened silently. Through the little square window a summer breeze blew in with a smell of hay, and we played song after song.

On a fine summer afternoon I was always to be had for water-carrying, even if it were not my fatigue. The pump was a quarter of an hour's walk from the ancient fortress, outside in the fields, at the edge of the road leading to the wood. If the big water-barrel in the fortress was empty one of us harnessed himself to the two-wheeled barrow to which the small barrel was fixed, and we went off to fetch water. The two others strolled along behind, giving a push when-

ever the road led upwards. A few yards behind us came the soldier, his rifle, with fixed bayonet, on his shoulder. Sometimes this escort met some acquaintance from the village, and then we went on far ahead along the road. At a bend in it the soldier disappeared: as though we were free. The sky smiled at us, the sun shone and a scented wind stroked our faces.

Usually I went with friends; Dudás and Németh, or Bárczy and Weiffert. Once four of us went out together, all of us in white trousers, white yachting-caps and light summer jackets. Some excursionists came along; two men and two well-dressed women. One of the men pointed a camera at us. . . .

Then Braggiotti, the Italian Tirolese, Reisner, whose shiny black beard had suddenly grown longer, and I took to going out together. We went nearly every afternoon. At the pump one of us, alternately, turned the iron wheel, the other filled the barrel, and the third, who was to do the horse-work, for the moment rested.

It was good to stretch out in the grass there. The deep blue of the sky sifted through the leaves' trembling lace-work; a mighty, yawning vault that filled one with the desire of being absorbed into it like a water-drop into the sunshine. Sometimes a bird fluttered out from a tree, drawing its song after it in flight like a coloured ribbon. All round were fields and silence, glittering silence in which I thought I caught the swish of the windmill or the hum of a wasp flying past. It would have been good always to draw water and watch the passers-by.

Towards three o'clock the priest passed, saluting us kindly. When we came back for the second time there would be holiday-makers to be seen, making for the shore. Sometimes a Spanish or American woman passed, and looked at us with the interest of pity. The Don Juan of our party was Braggiotti. He was a little bald already, but he had gleaming black eyes and his thick, coal-black moustache

pointed cockily upwards. If he succeeded in catching a woman's eye he would begin to turn the iron wheel as though he were mad, twirling furiously at it till the veins stood out on his temples.

At one time the holiday-makers made a fashion of walking in our direction to watch the water-carrying Boches. One afternoon eight young girls came by, on donkey-back. They came nearer, giggling, their skirts slipped quite up till above their stockings the naked flesh shone out. When they reached us they fell silent and watched us contemptuously. But they pulled their skirts up higher still. Amazons who whipped up desire in their slaves only to weal their backs with lashes.

The all-knowing Administrator of course soon scented the affair. After that his red-trouserred, big-bellied silhouette was always peeping out from behind the bushes or from behind the slats of some near-by window-blind. He defiled even our country. Now even here we were not free from him, and we came to imagine red-blue patches in the sky itself or in the trees' green foliage.

The walks to see us had gradually ceased. The Administrator had probably been down to the shore, and there in the hotels and on the restaurant terraces had told how difficult it was to deal with us. We were savages and square-heads and perhaps devil-hoofed too, and we would certainly break out and set the holiday-makers' houses in an uproar if he did not restrain us with a grip of iron. But if women with their inquisitive presence excited us monsters, then not even he would be able to deal with us. . . . I could imagine with what tooth-chattering the old ladies listened to Monsieur Ch——.

And none came any more to the well. Or rather, not quite none. She on whose account we three now for three weeks went out every day still came in spite of the Administrator's threats.

It would be when we came out for the third time. It was

already dusk by then. The evening wind brushed our faces refreshingly. The big sun-disc was sinking redly flaming behind the wood's green multitude. Now we would hear from far away the little American girl's bicycle-bell ringing. Her white figure peeped out of the wood and came towards us on dust-trailing wheels, bearing the most precious gift she could bring to prisoners, her smile.

Thirty paces from us she got off her bicycle and came towards us, picking a flower or two as she walked. By then our barrel was already filled. When she had passed us and our hungry eyes had drunk her smile we set off after her, lugging our jolting water-cart. So we went till the first house of the village. She felt and knew how dear to us was the bend of her young waist, the scent drifting to us from her white linen dress, and she loitered purposely, sometimes behind us, sometimes in front of us, bending to pick a flower here and there.

We had known her for two weeks now. At first she only passed us on her bicycle, and if we were lucky we met her as she came back from the village. Madame Mignale knew her. She was the daughter of a rich, eccentric American. They came to the island nearly every summer, and they had a fine villa over on the other side. She had once inquired of our canteen proprietress what sort of prisoners we were, and when Madame Mignale told her she was interested.

Our affair with her grew daily more passionate. Once the Italian succeeded in exchanging a few words with her. Then once, while our escort was deep in conversation, the American girl came close up beside us, her eyes downcast, and twisting some flowers in her hand, and as she fluttered away, whispered: 'Come out to-morrow. You three.'

You three. The whole way home we quarrelled as to for whose sake she had emphasised "You three." Just that day we were victims of a disgusting assault on our way home. Four soldiers from the village set on us with their fists. I was doing horse at the moment, and could not even defend

have swallowed the girl's figure from sight. So that was the end. I would never see her again. That I felt for certain, for suddenly I collapsed in a great weakness, as though the air over me had been turned to lead.

We set off. There was no one on the road now. We dragged home the creaking water-cart in silence. Our bending figures threw great shadows on the road. The soldier grumbled at us—'*Dépêchez-vous un peu, nom de Dieu!*'

CHAPTER X

PRISONERS' DOG

THE big-paunched, waxy-faced Administrator was seized again by the mania of despotism. He trundled his fat about all day, making a grumbling commentary on everything, clapping ten men or so into solitary confinement, sending for the room-presidents to thunder at them and read from a long list a whole series of new prohibitions—"Aux internés interdit . . ." When he had finished with the room-presidents he sent for the corporals and gave them a dressing-down: they were not visiting the *chambrées* often enough, they were not keeping to the times for the night rounds, they did not keep up discipline on the walks. Then came the soldiers. He bellowed at them that they had better do their duty properly or he would have them sent to the front. ('I wonder if he knows which way it is,' remarked the black-bearded corporal sarcastically as he stood in front of the offices superintending the internees bringing water for washing.)

The Administrator's disciplinary fit lasted right into the afternoon. Then all at once we became aware that he was bellowing his head off in the yard, and that soldiers were running about with a great clatter. What had happened? Had a mutiny started?

All the din and upheaval were on account of our poor old dog, Lolo. The Administrator was at him again. He had had him kicked out yesterday and the day before. Now again he had seen him in the yard and had thundered his command to have the recalcitrant creature brought before him.

Of course Lolo had taken to his heels as soon as he heard

the voice of the potentate. He was half blind and his legs were getting stiff, but he could still run faster and develop better tactics than the soldiers. Moreover, the prisoners gathered in the yard were helping him: Edward the glass-blower fell full length just in front of a soldier who was going to grab the dog, and the other men were forming screens behind which Lolo could manœuvre. The hunt went on for minutes, and we nearly all collected in the yard. That infuriated the Administrator still more. Now he wanted the dog caught at all costs. Why, I do not know. Perhaps because the creature loved us. He had meat twice a week and a bone twice a week, except for which his fare was what fell from prisoners' plates, which does not explain his choosing us for his masters. He used to come with us on all the walks, trotting along in the middle, for nothing would induce him to keep to the sides or front or rear where the escort was. So he too suffered by the Administrator's regulations, for he too never went near the sea. He padded along breathing even more than his share of road-dust, for he was a creature of a lower lever than we humans.

For all that the black dog had never abandoned us. He even lavished every sign of love and affection on us. Old though he was, he would try to sit up and beg if the German dockers had pleasure in it, jumped over a stretched string, watched the skittle matches with absorbed interest from beginning to end and took part in any game with the greatest enthusiasm. If possible he always accompanied the water-carrying expeditions. The American girl had once patted his clotted fur.

The Administrator must have known all that or about all that, for he nosed everything out. He had probably been taxed in the village with feeding the Boches too well if they could afford to keep a dog, and certainly Lolo was an outcast as far as the village was concerned.

Then they caught him. Excited shouts broke out on all sides. The black-bearded Breton soldier was triumphantly

lugging Lolo along the yard by the scruff of his neck, Lolo yelping pitifully and looking imploringly at us out of his one blood-shot eye. We ran after the dog. We were frantic and white with fear. Maravics' teeth were chattering with excitement; the old watchmaker Weiner was running along screaming and sobbing and shedding books from his pockets as he ran; Zádory was hurling dreadful curses at the head of the Administrator, who was waiting for his victim by the gate. It was a strange, mad upheaval. There must have been about a hundred of us in front of the Administrator's little building.

The Administrator noticed nothing of what was driving us. He jerked poor Lolo into the air by the ears and shouted at the sentry by the gate to stick the animal with his bayonet. The man brought his rifle down from his shoulder and levelled his bayonet at the dog to stab, when something happened.

It was some moments later we realised what we had done. In complete self-forgetfulness and deadly distress we gave one full-throated, desperate yell. I can conclude its startling strength only from its effect.

The soldier dropped his rifle, the rest of the guard rushed half-dressed and rifle in hand out of the guard-house. The Administrator stood motionless. He let the dog drop, and the poor beast lay flattened and trembling at his feet and did not dare to move. His sallow hangman's face grinned. His whole being was in that shrinking grin. He knew he was then in the throat of death, and with that forced, frozen smile he was trying to say it was all a joke, a pretence. The dog should come to no harm. The dog could go. What an excitement about nothing. Was his job killing dogs?

But that stony grin lasted only a few moments. Then he acted quickly. He ordered the gate to be opened and flung the dog out through it. Lolo slunk off with his tail between his legs as though he were ashamed that all the to-do had been on his account. Meanwhile the soldiers had fallen in. By the time the Administrator came back from

the gate the guard to a man stood before him. Some of them had no tunic and some were clogless, but all were clutching their rifles. The Administrator inspected them: one man had to show his rifle, to make sure it was loaded. That finished, the Administrator turned with all the arrogance of conscious power to us and made one gesture of dismissal. There was no need, for we were already back at whatever we had been doing.

Peace, however, was not absolutely restored all day. Everybody talked of Lolo. By evening he had become a legendary figure.

Yet he came back. One evening we were standing outside in the tower court in front of Nos. 1 and 2. The sky was cloudy, and a slow rain was sprinkling down. We were thinking of the autumn and the dankness and the everlasting confinement to the rooms, and talking of whether we should have to spend the winter in prison. We had no newspapers and only now and again news of the War leaked through to us from outside, or sometimes, a month late, we received disguised information in our letters from home. Somchow the news of the fall of Vilna had reached us and we were talking of the great German offensive in Russia and trying to imagine its consequences. It did not seem that it would make much difference to us so long as nothing happened on the Western Front.

Suddenly Maravics took his pipe out of his mouth and stared at the stone stairs leading from the court, and then gave a shout:

‘There’s Lolo. I’m damned if it isn’t Lolo. Look!’

Up the stairs, sneaking close to the wall, came Lolo himself, a shadow in the darkness, a dim-outlined patch darker than the night, slipping up noiselessly, stopping as though to listen for hostile voices, then starting off again.

In a moment the tower court was filled with men pouring out of the rooms. Lolo was everywhere, his fur all wet, his tail wagging madly. He did not bark; no noise was allowed;

but he radiated his delight and love with his whole self, wagging his bushy tail, giving his paw to his better acquaintances or licking their faces. There was a positive pilgrimage to Lolo, men arriving barefoot and in their night-shirts. Then they went back again, and only Lolo's most intimate circle stayed round him: Bistrán, who often had shared his sleeping-place with him; Weiner, who was his tutor; and the two kitchen men, Leitner and Neuberth, who had had most to do with his feeding.

A hiding-place was found for Lolo that same night. It was decided that for the present he must not show himself, and he must be exercised with all due precautions only at night. So after he had had a meal he was hidden, and that became his mode of life, hiding by day and coming out at night.

But it disagreed with him. He became melancholy and could not be induced to play at night. I think some secret illness had him too. One night there came a tragic change in his state. His hind-quarters stiffened till he could only drag himself a few paces on his front paws before collapsing miserably. He never moaned or whimpered. Only a very little throat-rattle shivered through his body, rising when at dawn Bistrán and Weiner picked him up to take him back to his hiding-place. He had a horror of this, where probably the rats attacked him mercilessly now he could not defend himself.

His nurses racked their brains to think of a place in the tower court where he could stay hidden by day, not only because of the dog's fear of his night-time place but because the Administrator seemed to be becoming suspicious. That was no wonder, for Bistrán and Weiner had been going about with faces mysterious enough to rouse anyone's suspicions, and Bistrán was a weird enough sight at the best of times.

Lolo grew worse and worse, and the rattle in his throat changed to a whine, a thin, muffled cry of pain, like a baby

suffocating. In the quiet nights we could all hear it from the rooms above the tower court.

Weiner spent all night with him, holding his head in his lap, pulling his big, floppy ears, stroking his mangy fur and talking to him all the time. He promised to take him away to Geneva, where he had a fine lodging and a canary and a beautiful white cat and lots of little puppies which would all be Lolo's servants. He described what sort of a bed he would have there and what he would eat. He spoke too of an old woman called Mme. Martin; she had white hair and a white apron and would take care of Lolo. The deaf, bent-backed Jew watchmaker talked to the suffering animal in a kind of fever, as though he were not talking to it but to himself in unpassing pain.

On the dog's last night Bistrán and Weiner decided to dig a hole for him at the bottom of the collapsed wall of the tower court, line it with wood, straw and rags, and then put the fallen stones back over the dog's head so that no one should suspect anything. Bistrán and Weiner could not leave the dog, so eight or ten of us prepared the place by the light of Jacob Vantur's lantern. The work lasted hours. Jacob provided the tools and produced a few boards while the rest of us collected straw and bits of rag.

By early dawn we had finished. The hole had a floor, there was water and a plate for Lolo's food, and we had put back the stones so that it looked like an ordinary stone-heap, though light and air could reach the dog. We were just admiring our finished handiwork and going to tell the nurses, who were crouching with Lolo beside the tower, when from behind us, up the stone stairs, came the clatter of feet and the click of weapons.

It was the guard, with lanterns and fixed bayonets and led by the Administrator, advancing with the triumphant mien of someone who after long spying makes such a capture as must earn him a medal and a pat on the back.

'What is this?' he began, pointing with both hands at the

freshly dug earth and the scattered tools. 'Do not deny anything. I warn you, you can reduce punishment by a full confession.'

The soldiers drew up ready for fight behind the Administrator. The whole scene was so unexpected that it never occurred to us to think of its funny side. The two kitchen men were the first to come to their senses, and they told the Administrator what was happening. Of course he would not believe it.

'What do you take me for? Do you want to have me believe that you come and dig here by night, making holes in the fortress wall, only to make a bed for a dog? Do you take me for an idiot, I who am a trained detective? And where is the dog you were trying to turn the whole place upside down for?'

Silently we made way for the mighty gentleman.

At the end of the court the dog lay, stretched out between Weiner and Bistrán. Weiner was wiping at his face with a grimy handkerchief. Bistrán was keeping dumb vigil over the beast, staring into the distance, not looking like a man at all. There was a mysterious smile on his bearded, uncanny face: he was a timeless, raceless being, as though the soul of the eight-hundred-year-old monastery's mould and dust and stifled cries and suffering had become incarnate in him and he were looking into a distance where the frontiers of life and death, pleasure and pain, long ago had faded to nothing.

'That cursed black dog again!' shouted the Administrator furiously.

'He is dead, M. l'Administrateur; do not touch him. He is dead,' Weiner cried aloud, and his voice choked.

We went towards the dog. Lolo's long-suffering body lay stretched before us in the light of dawn. It was only then we saw what an ugly thing illness had made of him. His hair had come out in patches, and the blotched skin showed through. The bones stuck out over his thin carcass. Yet there was some unexplainable beauty about him, perhaps

his utter peacefulness. His legs were bent as though he were still running.

The Administrator looked us over once again, scrutinising each of us in turn. Perhaps he was noting our names for the black list he always carried in his head; but perhaps not. In any case, he dropped the affair. He dismissed his soldiers and then, pointing to the dog, said only:

‘You must take him away from here.’

Then with heavy, sounding strides he left us.

We laid Lolo in the same hole as we had meant for his luxurious lodging. We threw the earth back and piled the stones, not having now to care whether the poor beast had light and air.

CHAPTER XI

PRISON IN PRISON

THE Administrator was not going to suffer calmly the fact that he had roused the whole guard in the middle of the night to nip Heaven knew what revolt in the bud, and then had found nothing but a dead dog. His discomfiture was known the next day in the village, and everybody was laughing at him. Pot-bellied old Palvadoz, the mayor, who was still angry at having been removed from the profitable post of Administrator, set up such a guffawing that it almost needed a doctor's intervention to stop him. His faithful spouse went the round of the houses of all the Noirmoutier elders giving a coloured account of the affair. For very shame the Administrator never left the fortress for days.

To revenge oneself on prisoners is no very difficult matter, especially for someone as mighty as the Administrator. Enough to hold up letters or parcels, to forbid this or that, and the weight of the life of confinement is increased a hundredfold.

Of the easy methods of revenge the Administrator selected the most refined and the most painful: he forbade us the use of the yard, the only refuge of the sleepless and nerve-racked, from seven o'clock in the evening onwards. From now on everybody had to go up to the rooms after the evening soup; he had the door of the stair leading down from the tower court to the yard shut, and, so that the soldiers should have a share in the unpleasantness, he set a sentry on the wall round the tower court to watch all night what the prisoners did in the shut keep building.

There were other consequences of this severity. From now on we could not go out to the top of the stairs outside the upper rooms, nor along the walls of the narrow tower court to draw a breath of air or to stretch our legs if after a whole day of rain the weather had cleared at night, for the sentry immediately shouted at us from above to go back into the rooms. But neither could we go down to our famous latrines, which were dug in one of the side-yards off the main yard. The Administrator solved that problem, however, by having some tall, thin barrels, which in the time of Guillaume's "liberal" regime had been used as baths, set up in the tower court in front of the rooms; and those rusty-hooped vessels, perpetually wobbling on the uneven pavement of the court, served for the performance of the not most aesthetic necessities of two hundred men.

There were only four such barrels altogether. After a short period of use they already gave forth a hideous stink, and were so filthy that if anyone by a feat of balance did manage to perch himself on one of them he could not possibly get down again without bringing a souvenir on him that was not only of his own making.

The angry Administrator set up these four collecting-pots of stinking pollution and disease in front of our rooms, where the air at best was unbearably fuggy and musty, so that whoever staggered out of the stagnant air of the crowded living-sleeping rooms into the tower court could breathe fresh night air only through those pestilential exhalations. But he was fatly satisfied at it all. Now let the Boches try their conspiracies! Now let them come with their ridiculous subterfuge of the dead dog! The Administrator went out into the village again, and set to talking of civilians who made a joke of his responsible work. What would happen to the peaceable inhabitants of Noirmoutier if he did not keep a check on those continually rebellious beasts? At that very moment he had positive information that one of the prisoners was conspiring with a soldier: the soldier let him down on a

rope by night, and the man went off to some abandoned girl or other who had no sense of patriotic duty. But let them see; he would catch the Boche all right, and the wench into the bargain.

We knew of these outbursts of the Administrator's from confidential information from Madame Mignale; he used to deliver them in some lesser tavern in company with some senile wine-bibbers of Noirmoutier. So we prepared for his supervision of the orders he had issued.

Then one night came the first inspection.

It was cool but clear weather. After two weeks of rain at last there was no longer the ceaseless patter of the drops, and the night was the stiller. We stared through the open leaves of the doors of the upper rooms into the night so soothingly broad and empty now that there was no curtain of rain stretched across it. A pale moon peeped out from between torn clouds. Opposite, on the iron-railed parapet of the wall, the shadowy guard was walking up and down, apparently paying little attention when one of us remained a few extra minutes in the tower court beyond the filth-barrels. Rubin, who before the War had been the representative in France of a Geneva watch-manufacturing company, had already been walking up and down in the court for at least ten minutes without the sentry ordering him back. The young fellow suffered a great deal from his stomach, and often felt terribly ill in the bad air of the rooms at night. The nights were tolerable to him only if he could spend half the time in the open air, even if it was raining. He was supposed to give money or tobacco to the sentries on duty in the tower court for them to let him stay outside in spite of regulations.

Under the smoky lamp in the ante-room the inevitable elder Weiner was reading. Soltész and Németh must have been having a restless night for they too were standing under the lamp, reading hard. Maravics was smoking his pipe and talking to the pugnacious Popper. Schnitta and Birkhan

were fighting a long-drawn chess battle, both wearing peaked caps back to front and both bending low over the sort of table on which the home-made chess-board lay. Birkhan, pushing the pieces about cunningly with his long, bony fingers, was singing a bit of a song he had learnt from his guitar-playing Austrian fellow-waiter—“*Ma Unschuld tu i net verkaufen. . .*” This moving refusal of the orphan girl to be taken in by the rich youth’s blandishments sounded strange on the lips of that blond, bony waiter; though it was probably only meant to convey that as a chess-player he considered himself no easy game. It is possible, however, that he had another intention, for Dr. Herz was also here among the night-birds, his face beaming contentedly, giving a French lesson to the Czech boy.

Such were our peaceful occupations when suddenly from the direction of the tower wall the quiet of the night was startled by a bellowing voice from above:

‘*Tirez sur lui!*’

Shoot him! In the quieted night a voice commanding death.

For a moment we stared at each other, then dashed for the door. Someone took the precaution of putting out the little oil-lamp in the ante-room, perhaps in consideration of the fact that it had been after all a dreadful profanation on our part to stay up, and the command might be meant for one of us.

The voice bellowed again:

‘*Tirez sur lui!*’

From the darkened upper room the scene in the moonlit court was better visible. On the parapet of the inner wall, leaning over the iron rail, stood the Administrator. We could clearly see his protruding belly, his fat thighs and jowly face. As he roared the command for the second time he swayed with his whole body till he had to grab the rail with both hands. Beside him stood another shadow. The moonlight twinkled greenly on a bayonet-point. The rifle

was still shouldered as the command came for the second time. The sentry did not obey his superior.

At that moment Rubin ran out of the shadows of the tower court and called up to the Administrator:

'Are we among savages, Monsieur l'Administrateur? Because I feel ill and come out here to walk is no reason for shooting me down.'

Then we understood. The Administrator had come up to inspect the sentry. He had actually climbed up the fortress wall in the main yard and clambered along the break-neck way round to the corner of the tower opposite the keep building, to surprise the sentry and possibly us. He had purposely chosen the first evening when it was not raining because we were more likely to be out in the yard.

The Administrator's voice and Rubin's reply were of course audible to everyone in the keep building. The ante-room suddenly filled with men pouring out of the rooms. The window of Room 6, which was above the tower court, opened with a clatter.

We waited in tense silence for what should happen. Rubin stood motionless in the middle of the court. The sentry still did not touch his weapon. The Administrator felt that for the preservation of his authority he must see the thing through. He must have noticed the agitation of the figures in the ante-room. He made a show of strength.

'If you have decent reasons, why do you sneak about in the dark, late at nights? What? Answer that!' he bellowed so furiously that he choked.

'I've told you already that I was feeling ill and came out to get some air. You can't keep your feeling ill to regular times.'

'Ah, you dare still laugh at me? Let us see who you are. Come out of the shadow. Let me see you'—and as he said it he tried to bend over the rail and take stock of Rubin. But suddenly he so overbalanced that the sentry had to grab him with both hands to stop him falling into the court below.

Then a startling thing happened. As the Administrator was trying to regain his balance up there on the wall a terrific voice shouted suddenly from the ante-room:

'You drunken swine! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You're so drunk you can't stand up straight.'

A ghostly silence followed. What was going to happen now? Would the Administrator rouse the whole guard? Would he order his man to shoot into the shadowy figures in the ante-room? Or have him turn his weapon on Rubin, who had come right out into the moonlight?

Nothing of the sort happened. There was a couple of moments' tense silence and then the Administrator drew himself up and thumped himself on the chest.

'I am drunk, am I? I've been drinking too much, have I? How dare you say such a thing? Administrator Ch—— knows his duty. Of that you may be sure: he is never drunk!'

At that a general laugh went up in the ante-room. Now we all knew the Administrator really was drunk.

There must have been something creepy in the roar of laughter from that invisible crowd, for the Administrator suddenly grew nervous, took his cap off and wiped his sweating forehead with his handkerchief.

The same voice repeated:

'You're drunk! You're a drunken swine!'

And then, perhaps because that first dared word had opened the flood-gates of long dammed-back bitterness, came other voices from the darkness of the room, cursing and abusing: then a strange, swelling, ominous chorus, as though the souls of condemned men were rising in accusation of their executioners.

'Salaud! Embusqué! Cochon! Tas de merde! Saligaud! Tu veux nous tuer, sale ivrogne? Lâche chien! . . .'

A fury of cursing impeachment caught us. A slashing with words and curses. The prisoners' torturer was in their hands. They rushed to kick and bite and throttle. They flung with foul words his every former cruelty in his face. They

shrieked of cells and of parcels lost and those stinking barrels. One charge led to another, one curse to the next. It all rose and culminated in one wild, seething, terrible howl in French and German and Hungarian which might well not have come from men's throats but from some giant, immeasurable monster.

To that general, wild screaming there suddenly was joined a thin voice like a child weeping, untiringly repeating only one word—'Phalaris! Phalaris! Phalaris!' At first the other voices completely drowned that hoarsening pipe. But then, perhaps because there was so much choking passion in it, or because no one knew the word in which such helpless raging fury rang, the other cursers gradually grew silent round it, and from the dark room came only in unending repetition—'Phalaris! Phalaris!'

It was the elder Weiner's voice. He had been wrenched out of his deaf gentleness by that furious scene, and, hoarse and panting and with clenched fists he was struggling through the crowd in an attempt to get at the hated enemy who had caused the death of his beloved dog. Luckily the men did not let him break from the room. His voice rose more and more frighteningly, a hoarse, rattling screech, as though he were suffocating.

The Administrator had scarcely heeded the other curses, but Weiner's voice frightened him. He could feel the supernatural strength of crazy rage in it, and moreover the mysterious word disquieted him. As Weiner's voice drove at him nearer and nearer and with always more terrible intensity he gradually recoiled, drawing himself back as though a glowing iron were being thrust nearer his face. At last he could stand it no longer. Quite tamedly, almost beseechingly he called across the railing:

'Stop that, please. What do you want with me? I confess it was a misunderstanding on my part. Stop it.'

And when everyone was silent the Administrator, sober now and unnaturally tame, added:

'Let us forget the whole thing. I was only doing my duty.'

'A dirty duty,' came the first deep voice again.

'Maybe a dirty duty,' acknowledged the Administrator almost humbly, 'but a duty.'

That was the end of it. The Administrator went off down his breakneck way, the sentry resumed his beat. The ante-room gradually emptied. Someone lit the oil-lamp again.

By its smoky light I caught sight of the elder Weiner standing leaning against the wall. His big, greenish-blue eyes were wide and glittering, his greying hair clung damply to his narrow, bony forehead and his thin lips were still trembling as though the rage breaking from him still lingered there. Had this fanatical, dream-surrounded cripple to come from Geneva to France to see the supposed French revolution? Not long ago news had come to him from Geneva that all his belongings, furniture and tools had been sold up. Now he had not even a home. Madame Martin, the canary, the puppies, everything of which he had talked to the dying Lolo was only a conscious, pious lie.

'Weiner,' I asked him, as he greeted me with a nod, 'what was that mysterious word you have just been hurling at the Administrator's head?'

Weiner crooked his hand behind his ear, and the old smile was on his pinched, thin face again as he bent his head for me to repeat the question. To my shame as a Classical master I learnt that Phalaris was a Sicilian despot who used to burn his victims in a brazen bull, taking more pleasure in their shrieks than in the sweetest harmonies.

Weiner pulled an old leather-bound work out of his book-stuffed pocket and sank back into his own world.

The next day it clouded over again and the hopeless, stubborn November rain set in again. For a few days we enjoyed retrospectively that nocturnal scene, and wherever

we gathered, fell to discussing Weiner's branding "Phalaris." But afterwards we forgot that too. The fog and the clouds and the ceaselessly pouring rain obliterated everything.

Then there began to grow up in the fortress that unreal dream-life to which we fled from the hateful monotony of everyday. We began not to notice the other men any more. All our surroundings faded into the background, and by a strange reaction we absorbed ourselves utterly in the mania or the fantasies or work or amusement or whatever it was to which we devoted our whole day.

About five o'clock in the afternoon work stopped in the rooms. Darkness gathered more quickly here between those thick walls than outside under the open sky. Few of the men could afford lamps. Before going down to the yard for a stroll the men used to rest a moment on their mattresses. The din of sewing-machines, hammers, drills, planes, chisels, laboriously practised instruments and quarrelling died down. Strange little noises rose in the room. The daily, stubborn struggle against the reality of life's wretchedness relented a moment. Fantasy reigned then without opposition. If there was weeping, it was not of pain nor accusation. We did not ourselves weep, but wept for ourselves. The silence deepened. If someone of the noisy promenaders in the yard had happened to stray up to our room and come in, he might have thought there was no one in the room, unless he had brought the light of an especial comprehension to see the throng of resplendent figures and diversity of experience: a great, brightly lit stage onto which life, all life crowded, while below with a deceptive clamour empty shadow-figures ground out their daily convict-exercise.

In the rainy months our chief concern was how to improve a little our intolerable quarters. In the rooms there was scarcely anything to be achieved. So we had recourse to the tower-rooms. These were not rooms so much as

sections of well-shafts. The wet mould dribbled from the high, round wall. Scarcely any light leaked in through the loophole-like windows. We found them in such a derelict condition that at first our warders did not allow us to live in them. But the lack of sleeping-space, the search for comparative solitude gradually succeeded in transforming those mildewed holes into bed- and sitting-rooms.

First of all, Dudás the aviator took possession of one of the tower-rooms leading out of No. 6. The place was separated from the common room by a stout oak door, and with that shut one could enjoy all the delights of solitude. There was just enough room in it for the broad peasant bed bought in the village, Dudás' travelling-trunk—the "coffin" one—which the aviator had with a complicated rope tackle hauled up the wall till it dangled in the air like Mahomet's coffin, and a little oil-stove which he had imported. This last stank and never succeeded in drying out the damp, but in front of its opening was stretched some red oiled paper and through this a friendly, warm red glow leaked into the room. He had also bought a basin through the canteen, arranged his toilet things on little shelves—with a half-litre bottle of eau-de-Cologne in the middle—and had made an array of tinned goods and a kettle on other shelves.

Dudás received his guests sitting on the bed. He was always well dressed and he liked beautiful things and quiet speech. But sometimes something disturbed his atmosphere. I do not know if a tragic incident of his schooldays still weighed on him, when he had accidentally shot a school-fellow after a childish quarrel, or if he had a love-affair in the background ever since he had been in Northern Hungary; or perhaps his parents were impoverished or he had quarrelled with them. He very rarely received letters and then never from home. He had a habit, especially when playing chess or when he was absent-minded, of twisting and tugging at his short moustache. Long after he had solved the chess or card problem he would still go on pulling his moustache

as though, forgetful of everything, he had stepped off his plank-bridge of little worries into the waves of great troubles. Then, when he came to himself after such moments, he would screw up his eyes, perhaps to force his gaze away from great issues back to pettier scenes. This loss of balance was only very occasional. Otherwise he always had something to talk about.

He used to talk of the Bácska, of Blériot and his flying apprenticeship, and his mobilisation-time experiences in Paris and of the adventures he and the blond Budapest lawyer and the engineer Fenyvesi had had together. Then there were his plans. He and Fenyvesi used to design models of flying-machines in internment. Like all of us, he had a pet plan of how he would return to Budapest when he was set free. For hours he would consider whether it would be better to take to the air in Switzerland, or wait till Vienna. He would arrive at dusk, when the windows of the royal palace burn with a red glow, and the sky is a merging of pinks and yellows, greens and blues, and the water of the Danube is like liquid gold, and the ringing from the castle church in Buda rises to his welcome like doves. . . .

Dudás' private room naturally set a fashion. Three Austrian waiters took possession of the other, somewhat bigger tower-room off No. 6, but they did not abolish much of the ravages of time there. The kitchen men occupied the tower-room of No. 4. There black-bearded Leitner invented ways of smoking meat and sausage, and was joined by Reichsfeld, who regularly received money from home and liked to be near the source of supplies.

It was difficult to make the tower-room of No. 5 habitable. It had to be freshly plastered and whitewashed, and had to have new window-frames put in and the floor relaid. But Maravics, who could afford it, had set his heart on the room, and his factotum and the three Stockers did the work in a week. Maravics invited Németh and me to share his lodging. He had special little tables made for us, had the three mat-

tresses transformed into a divan by day and put the tables in front of it, set pens and ink before us—and Németh and I had to work. Németh was translating plays of Corneille, and I began a novel. Maravics smoked ceaselessly and studied his various genealogical works.

Work went on often from one morning to the next. Maravics could not sleep in any case. In the evening Edward stopped up the loopholes by covering them with sheets of cardboard so that no light could be seen from outside. He put the mattresses ready so that if the guard came up in the night we could put out the light and get straight onto our beds. Then, by the light of a good lamp, we set to defying the two great prohibitions: reading at night and smoking. An hour later one could have cut the smoke with a knife. To that was added the smell of the mould, which our careful blocking-up of chinks confined entirely to the room. Then there would come a call from the yard, or Edward gave a warning knock on the door, and we hurriedly put out the light and slipped under our blankets. Ten or twenty minutes' anxious waiting followed. Maravics gave the order to snore. It would not really have helped much, for there was smoke enough to give us away, but we snored for all that. The tramping of the soldiers died down, or the whole thing was a false alarm, and then we lit the lamp again, smoked and read again. So it went on till dawn.

I could not stand that rate of work for long, relieved as it was only by endless talks or argument. The Administrator, realising there was an opportunity of granting favours in these rooms, set the tower-room of No. 3, which was just underneath Maravics', at Fenyvesi's disposal, by way of atonement for having deposed him from the presidency of the room-presidents. Fenyvesi asked me if I would not like to go and live with him, and I accepted joyfully, for however nice a boy Maravics was I simply could not stand his nocturnal mode of living. Later, Lakatos occupied my place.

In my new lodging I at last found my old peace-time friends, rest and quiet. Their presence in the first days was so remarkable that I felt them almost as actual persons. It is true that even here our friendship could not be complete. One could still hear, say, the Tirolese gypsy dancing in No. 3, Poss playing the fiddle or Dr. Herz quarrelling with the Czech boy. From Maravics' room dropped fragments of argument, much as the falling dirt or spilt liquids. But that was nothing in comparison to the ear-shattering concert of hammering, sawing, quarrelling, singing and playing to which I had been subjected in No. 6.

Here sometimes the silence was so present that I could think someone was watching me. Fenyvesi was very little in the room. His nervousness declared itself in perpetual movement. Now that he had nothing official to run about for, he ran about for other reasons. His other mania was lengthy arguments. Encountering anyone congenial on his runs, he would plunge into hour-long dispute. It happened that he once started in the morning from No. 3, and by the time he reached the yard it was midday. He would meet someone in the ante-room or on the stairs, and, standing there all the time as though he were about to resume his running, he would talk and talk for hours. Never of his private affairs. All abstractions. He was fond of chess, too, but even then he did not sit down. He played endless games standing. At night, just when we were going to bed, perhaps something would occur to him and he would launch into speculation. He would stare straight at one point in his blanket, his big, bald head bent a little forward and his lips open under his thick, black, cropped moustache. He stared and thought. I would go to sleep, then be woken by something hours later and there he still was, motionless, staring and thinking.

Gradually I came to ornament my room. Jacob Vantur contrived a sort of canopy out of some cheap stuff and we pulled it up to the ceiling through a hole bored in the floor

of Maravics' room. That kept the dirt from falling on our heads. I arranged my artistic treasures on little shelves fixed to the wall. Zádory's little clay statues (they were all lovers in various attitudes) and a statue of the Madonna in wood. All round the wall I set photographs, and such drawings and pictures as from an official or ethical point of view (they were by the two Poles, or by Willersdorfer and Zádory) could be displayed. I too had one of Von Bergen's kneeling Russian women, and besides that the 'cello he had carved for me with such great and laborious skill, hanging also on the wall of the room. My books I put in a cupboard made out of packing-cases.

So everything was complete. I needed only a stove. The Administrator would not allow its erection. He was anxious for the aged wall of the building, though only a hole big enough to let the pipe of the stove pass would have had to be cut in it.

At the end of November, however, when we were suffering great discomfort from the damp cold, that problem too was solved.

One afternoon heavy steps were heard in No. 3, my door was pulled open and the Administrator came in accompanied by a tall, somewhat martial-looking man with a waxed moustache and in a tweed suit.

'*Voilà*, Monsieur l'Inspecteur-Général,' announced the Administrator loudly.

As it later appeared, that "*Voilà*" and the proud wave of the Administrator's hand with which he displayed my room were occasioned by the fact that the Inspector-General was not satisfied with our quarters. He had called the *réfectoire* and the rooms and the kitchen not fit for pigs, let alone for men, so the Administrator had brought him up to my room to show him something better.

He cannot have been very much better pleased with that. He sniffed about, looking at the windows and the mattresses, and then he turned to me:

'Do you stay here in this stinking hole? Why don't you go down into the yard and walk?' (Just at that moment it was not raining.)

He was looking at me kindly, and there was some pity in his voice. I said I did not go for a walk now because I was working at a novel. That astonished him. He bent over the manuscript, looked at all my little picture gallery.

I watched him curiously. He had come from the outside world and he brought on him the signs of a life new and unknown as far as I was concerned. His clothes were of a cut unknown to me, and it occurred to me that there was no crease, dirt or patch on the whole suit. I stared admiringly at his gloves and his stick and his polished shoes. I had thought that now in the war-world fashion had stood still, luxury had ceased, everybody was as needy as we were and the whole world was composed of soldiers and interned civilians. It was a good thing that the Parisian gentleman had come: and I went on staring at him without it occurring to me that he might be some use.

So I was very astonished when he turned from examining my gallery and said in a friendly voice:

'It seems you have known better society?'

He paused and looked at me intently, and only then, following his glance, I realised that what with my workman's suit, enormous clogs, rough brown muffler round my neck, it really needed some insight to conclude that I had once known better society.

'Is there anything you need?' inquired the Inspector-General. 'Of course I cannot do much, but I might be able to help your position here. Isn't there something you need in this hole?'

The Administrator shifted uneasily. The twice-repeated "*trou*" did not please him when he was so proud of my tower-room. He remarked coldly:

'The internees cannot have anything to complain of. Not long ago I announced I myself would take the "Intellectuals"'

once a fortnight for a special walk. Imagine, Monsieur l'Inspecteur-Général, no one took advantage of this *douceur*!

Apparently the Inspector-General could very well imagine, for he ignored the interruption and said to me encouragingly: '*Eh bien?*'

I came out with the stove question. I explained that I would buy the little stove and myself bear the cost of its installation, and I only asked permission somehow to put the pipe through the wall.

The Administrator hotly opposed the plan. He referred to the military authorities. He, after all, was a soldier, not a civilian. He had strict orders to allow no change in the building. What would happen if every prisoner began knocking holes in the wall?

The Inspector-General tried to argue the Administrator round to a more reasonable point of view, but when he saw that it was useless he simply snapped at him:

'I order you to allow the erection of the stove. Do you understand? *C'est tout.*'

The Administrator, scarlet to the ears, bowed.

'As Monsieur l'Inspecteur-Général commands.'

The Inspector-General nodded good-bye and went off with the Administrator. When they had left the building the inhabitants of No. 3 came one after another to inquire what had happened. They had never seen the Administrator in such a state, and the Parisian gentleman had been dressing him down in not the mildest fashion all through No. 3. Two minutes later the eldest Stocker was already lustfully banging his crowbar into the castle's ancient wall, while, as though the Administrator's projecting paunch itself were before him, with every spiteful blow he repeated:

'Take that, Big-Belly, take that. . ..'

When once I had a heated room I never left it for weeks. There was nowhere I could have gone. At the beginning

of December the rain was varied by a few days' snow—now it was certain the Boches had brought the snow, for this was the second year it fell—and after that the rain set in again. I did not even go to the canteen, for my pay from home had stopped some months before, and till the question was solved I had nothing but my friends' help and what my father sent me. Jacob cooked our meal in my room. Often Zádory came and ate with me, smacking his lips over every bite till I nearly believed his transports. He spent all day carving at the bits of bone he collected in the yard, and had no more desire to go down than I had. There was never any good to be got from it, and the picture was always terribly the same: the big, battered, locked gate, the red-trousered, blue-coated soldiers walking up and down in front of it; shivering prisoners, some of whom treadmilled their hundred-yards way from the *réfectoire* to the Administrator's little house and back again whether it rained, blew or snowed; a few men round the canteen, standing about or buying food or tobacco. Madame Mignale did not smile now as she handed over the things: she sat in her hut wrapped in a black shawl, weeping ceaselessly. Two months before she had received the news that her husband had been killed on the Eastern Front. . . . There was no need to look: if you shut your eyes you saw the madly running Riedl, the water-carriers or vegetable-peelers, the Administrator forging with dignified strides across the yard. The noises and smells were the same. In the dining-room the same games were going on, the same men quarrelling over the same things. Nothing ever happened out of the ordinary. Nothing ever happened at all.

I buried myself completely in books, Andor Németh and I reading together. We read all Goethe, Kleist, Hebbel, all Shakespeare, about ten plays of Calderon and the whole of *Don Quijote*, and anything else that came into our hands. And still we had plenty of time, and if we had nothing new we began the whole sequence all over again. In the late afternoons we read French, separately. There were enough

books in French, and we needed not make one do for two people. Sometimes for days I would never leave the surroundings or figures of a novel. I would put the book down late in the evening, dream about it all night and take up the story again the next morning, and my real life never jostled me out of that imaginary world for a moment.

Perhaps on account of this craving for living other lives I especially loved writers whose realism is achieved by a rendering of minute detail. My appropriation through books of the lives of others and of the whole splendour of natural surroundings was no aesthetic pleasure. All I had for scenery was the damp walls of a well-shaft and a little window through which the fields and trees of the island were reduced to the sort of intangible thing that is the picture of the universe given by geography. I had to seek the buzzing of a fly, the sun falling on fields, a village street, the furniture of a little room—all in books. I had to live in books, and I did so to such a degree that I read Dostojevski's *House of the Dead* without seeing the comparison to be drawn with my own state.

In the case of some books these imaginings became so vivid as actually to condense to visions and step out from the page. I especially feared in this respect Flaubert. It was while reading *L'Éducation sentimentale*, at the place where he describes the meeting of Frederic and Mme. Arnoux on the Seine steamer, the woman listening to the beggar's harp-playing and Frederic drinking in the unknown woman, drawing her to himself, that suddenly at the words "when the music stopped her eyelids fluttered several times as though she were waking from a dream" I saw in the half-light of the room Mme. Arnoux's face beside me: she turned her gaze on me, and the light of her strange, inviting smile was so near that the blood rushed to my head, my heart began to thump and I had to rush from the vision down into the yard. That was the first time in my imprisonment that such a thing appeared to me.

The second time was when I was reading a poem of Heine's, when something happened that made me stop reading for that day. I went and found Németh, and after much hesitation told him what was happening. I expected him to look at me in a startled fashion and then with apparent serenity try to talk the matter out of my head. But nothing of the sort happened. His face cleared. He told me he had had like experiences, first with a terribly vivid and repeated dream after reading a French poem, then with the *Chartreuse de Parme*. There is a scene in that book where the jealous Count comes into his bride's room and finds her sitting there with her handsome cousin. In a fever of jealousy the Count sees nightmarish things. He has the illusion that the woman and the young man are not talking but kissing each other before his eyes—"Il devenait fou, il lui semblo qu'en se penchant ils se donnaient des baisers, là, sous ses yeux." That wilful illusion may have had its psychological reasons. After all, an intimate conversation is often a kissing without its actual realisation. But Németh while reading found himself seeing the two figures kissing, not through the Count's distortion of jealousy, but in reality. The picture was in such vividness before him that he was afraid. He read the lines several times over, stopping at every phrase to strengthen his sense of reality and repeating aloud that it was only a question of the Count's nervous fantasy, but still he could not free himself from the picture of their exchanging not words but kisses. The stubborn hallucination had so frightened him that he had not dared look at the book again.

As soon as we had discussed these symptoms we did not find them so terrible. We discovered that the same sort of thing had been going on in Weiner when he had cursed the Administrator for a Phalaris. Later, when I came to be a friend of Dr. Herz, and he promoted me his confessor, he told me of similar experiences, if in a somewhat queerer connection. He insisted that he would perhaps never have

books in French, and we needed not make one do for two people. Sometimes for days I would never leave the surroundings or figures of a novel. I would put the book down late in the evening, dream about it all night and take up the story again the next morning, and my real life never jostled me out of that imaginary world for a moment.

Perhaps on account of this craving for living other lives I especially loved writers whose realism is achieved by a rendering of minute detail. My appropriation through books of the lives of others and of the whole splendour of natural surroundings was no aesthetic pleasure. All I had for scenery was the damp walls of a well-shaft and a little window through which the fields and trees of the island were reduced to the sort of intangible thing that is the picture of the universe given by geography. I had to seek the buzzing of a fly, the sun falling on fields, a village street, the furniture of a little room—all in books. I had to live in books, and I did so to such a degree that I read Dostojevski's *House of the Dead* without seeing the comparison to be drawn with my own state.

In the case of some books these imaginings became so vivid as actually to condense to visions and step out from the page. I especially feared in this respect Flaubert. It was while reading *L'Éducation sentimentale*, at the place where he describes the meeting of Frederic and Mme. Arnoux on the Seine steamer, the woman listening to the beggar's harp-playing and Frederic drinking in the unknown woman, drawing her to himself, that suddenly at the words "when the music stopped her eyelids fluttered several times as though she were waking from a dream" I saw in the half-light of the room Mme. Arnoux's face beside me: she turned her gaze on me, and the light of her strange, inviting smile was so near that the blood rushed to my head, my heart began to thump and I had to rush from the vision down into the yard. That was the first time in my imprisonment that such a thing appeared to me.

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looked upon the Czech boy with any but the eyes of friendship if he had not read in *Othello* Iago's story of how Cassio, dreaming of Desdemona, would throw himself on him "... and then kiss me hard, as if he plucked up kisses by the roots, that grew upon my lips." The frightful vividness of that description so haunted him that he saw his Desdemona in the sleeping Czech boy.

From the beginning of November onwards we were allowed to go once a fortnight to church. Permission from the Prefecture was obtained for us by that grey-haired priest who used so friendlily to answer our greetings on the water-carrying expeditions. He had met once, weeks before, Ullrich, who was room-president of No. 5 and had been a gentleman's servant in peace-time, and Tutschek, the fearfully pale Austrian waiter with the protruding blue eyes. They were pulling bent-backed at the water-cart, in knee-deep mud, when the priest, under a big umbrella, met them.

They and the escorting soldier and the priest all huddled under the umbrella and talked for more than an hour. Both Ullrich and Tutschek were devout Catholics. Ullrich had been in the service of a high ecclesiastical official just before the War, when his employer had died. Tutschek used to spend all day praying in one of the window-recesses in No. 6. The others had little to do with him, perhaps because of his terrifying looks. There was something lunatic in the expression of his face when his mouth twisted to a smile under his thin moustache and his big, yellow teeth showed. They said he had a French wife; two of his little children had died in the death camp at Sables d'Olonne, and his wife had gone with the remaining child to Austria to some poor relations of his. If, suppressing a nervous fear, one tried to talk to him, one saw that behind his awful exterior a strangely gentle soul was hidden.

When the priest parted from them he promised to obtain

the permission from the Prefect. At the beginning of November the order arrived. Its execution was left to the Administrator, who did not carry it out exactly in the spirit in which it was conceived under the priestly umbrella. Every Monday morning we got up at four and met in the yard at five o'clock. We could not see each other, we could only call our names, disembodied voices which only became dim outlines in the light of the soldiers' lanterns. The escort surrounded us for fear we should escape in the dark. The Administrator bustled up and down giving orders.

At last the gate opened.

We tramped across the wooden bridge, our eyes gradually accustoming themselves to the darkness. The church tower was dimly visible against the misty sky. The street was asleep. Every ten paces stood a soldier with a lantern. We reached the church in a few minutes. There the soldiers remained behind, hustled us through the door and locked it behind us.

We sat down along the benches and listened to the silence of the church. The smell of faded flowers was in the building. Far away, on the altar, one candle flickered.

We waited, motionless, and waited; and that care-free waiting, that dissolution in Heavenly silence, was the best thing in the world. We could have sat there for days without a care or desire stirring within us.

While we waited the light of coming dawn almost imperceptibly filtered and filtered in through the big windows of the nave. First the paler colours of the stained glass filled with light, then the darker ones, and slowly the whole window became visible like a dreamed vision hanging in the air.

Then we noticed each other, though as the faces grew out of the darkness they were not yet recognisable. We woke from our self-absorption to look at each other in wonder. Who were we? How did we come there, sitting beside each other? Pale, ragged, stranger figures staring in front of themselves, sitting there in wordless seriousness, perhaps

guardians of great secrets, perhaps old monks or the condemned prisoners of the Republic. .

Then the faces gradually hardened to those we knew. Ullrich, Tutschek, Schneider, Kilar, Dudás in the front row. The Tirolese, the three Stockers, Braggiotti, Zsiga Nagy. . . . We filled the first few pews on both sides. There were men of other religions there too.

I looked away from them to whence the flower-scent came. At first I saw only a white line, but by the time the bell began to ring the whole figure grew out of the dusk, a wooden, smiling-faced little Madonna.

Looked at from far away she was as though alive. Her dark blue robe was caught up to her, under her white linen her breast heaved in breathing, a smile started from her lips and her eyes grew and grew till one could lose oneself in their depths. Some worshipper had wreathed a rosary between her slim hands. The whole figure was so small, the little Madonna did not tear me into infinity, but bore infinity with her. Poor little greatly-suffering Mother of prisoners. In her fragile little being, the sickly, fallen-in face, the tiny, petal-like hands, the eyes burning with a consumptive fever, I found everything I was looking for.

The candles lit up, the organ sounded, the hoarse-voiced cantor sang and the grey-haired priest in his robes began the ceremony.

Though he fulfilled everything with almost purposeful deliberation it was quickly over. We formed up again, and the soldiers closed in on us in front of the church. No one was about yet in the street, yet they hurried us on. We passed under bare old trees with a carpet of brown leaves round their trunks. Then the fortress appeared. The bugle was just sounding inside its high walls.

CHAPTER XII

CHRISTMAS MONTH, 1915

THEY took the Germans away. The order arrived one morning, and they had to pack up the next day. They had twenty-four hours' notice to tear themselves up from the ancient fortress where for a year and more, however feebly, they had been rooted. The board and lath bedsteads for their straw mattresses, the little chairs and gimcrack tables, shelves, empty jam-pots, cooking-stoves, fire-irons, pots and pans had all suddenly become nothing worth. Biesenbach and Von der Hohe conducted a last great bargain-sale within the Black Monastery.

The evacuation of Nos. 1 and 2 took all day. Only now, looking at the variegated rubbish-heap in the little tower court, we saw what the accumulations of a year and more in the rooms amounted to. Jumble, parcel-wrappings, string, book-covers, envelopes, rags and tattered linen and a great host of the things that one nearly throws away and then keeps after all because they might be useful some day.

One of the German dockers had a whole sack of bits of dry bread that he had to throw away. Bits of all ages, from the age-petrified and mould-covered to the still usable two-weeks-old. To the bread was added a mouse's nest, built by careful parent mice in the bottom of the man's mattress close to those abundant supplies for generations of little mice.

Some of those who were not leaving found a strong attraction in the heap of jumble. They could still find a use for a deal of what the departing men considered rubbish. Whoever changes from one place to another renews his belief in

change and the good coming from change. Those bound to one place are more circumspect.

I watched Jacob Vantur, who was not only bargaining for the more valuable things but fishing about among the jumble for what he could find. Max cursed him for a profiteering scavenger, but he was quite undisturbed. He merely gestured with the unoccupied one of his bony, red-blue hands—'You going to teach me, *du leichtsinniges Luder?*' Beside him was Demeter Bistrán, performing another of his "Secretarial" duties. He was hugging in both hands a collection of the jumble that reached up to the tip of his bushy, prophetic beard. Demeter was not pleased. At bottom he probably agreed with Max. But to what will the necessity of living not drive a man? So he went on lifting his beard to try and keep it out of his noisome burden.

Rosenberg, the lover of solitude, was also strolling round the rubbish-heap. He had wrapped his long, greenish, caftan-like overcoat round him, and, clutching in his left hand the inevitable eating-pot, was walking about shooting an occasional glance from underneath his thick eyebrows at the discarded things. His professional eye noticed immediately if anything usable turned up. Then he would walk quietly over to it, with a swift movement pick it up, stuff it into his big pocket and with an air of profound and absent-minded self-absorption continue his strolling.

Leave-taking went on all day in front of the Germans' rooms, both they and we a little sad. It was certain then that they were being taken to Ile d'Yeu. We had not heard much good spoken of that place. The men were shut up in underground casemates of a citadel built on an uninhabited island. The Administrator had always used to threaten us with Ile d'Yeu. Anyone of whom he was afraid or of whom he wanted to be rid he sent there. The Frenchified Alfred of the "Meine-deine" and "Sixpence" had both ended there, and that scandalous ex-legionary Schlitter was there too. There was supposed to be a great number of

criminals fresh from prison and legionaries who had refused further service. Of evenings we had seen from the top of the stone staircase the beam of a lighthouse flash out in the distance. That was the lighthouse on Ile d'Yeu.

'It can't be worse than Noirmoutier,' we comforted the Germans. There was only one Ch—— in the world. We were all ridden by a bitter longing to get out of Noirmoutier, no matter where to, only away from it. We did not want to see the drenched, weather-worn, wind-riddled keep building any longer, nor the everlasting mud nor the crowded rooms nor the Administrator's ubiquitous, cunning moon-face. That man was like a deadly gas, though he himself may have not been able to help it, may have been urged on by some morbid pleasure in suffering.

For months in personal and collective petitions we had pressed for nothing else than to be taken away from there. After the scene where Ch—— had wanted to shoot Rubin we had written a collective petition to the Prefecture to have us removed to another camp. The Administrator declared collective petitions were not allowed. Then Schnitta—the mildest of the Hungarian waiters, who was always fiddling and learning new languages—Popper, Maravics and the Budapest banker's son (to whom the Administrator, on a hint from above, tried to be very gracious) and several others sent a signed denunciation to the Prefect, relating the scene with Rubin and ending with the request that we should be sent anywhere away from Noirmoutier. The Administrator read the denunciation, and with a frozen smile remarked only: 'Your request will doubtless be granted.'

Then the American Embassy in Paris sent someone from its staff to Noirmoutier to look into the condition of the internees and to hear complaints. We waited in tense excitement for weeks for the commissioner. Everybody had his complaint. One wanted to complain of his interrupted correspondence, another of his missing parcels and money remittances. Others had questions to put: what had hap-

pened to their fiancées, their parents, their brothers who had joined the Foreign Legion? All desperately urgent questions for the men. There must have been about a hundred and forty of us then at Noirmoutier, and we had about three times that number of questions or complaints to make!

That was not counting the great memorandum we made up of our legitimate grievances on the score of treatment, food, sanitation, letters and so on—all under more than a hundred headings. The whole thing began by saying that French subjects in Austria-Hungary were not interned at all, but were free to come and go as they wished, so that all these things done in the name of reprisals were falsely based and were in opposition to the principles of humanity accepted in time of war.

And then there came a tall, thin, dry man. He made a five-minutes tour of the rooms in company with the Administrator. Then he let it be known that he would receive no one on personal matters, he only wished to hear from a deputation of three whether we had any complaints. The deputation appeared, but had scarcely opened its mouth when the commissioner interrupted:

‘Please be brief. I have at most only a quarter of an hour.’

He had travelled for a day and a half from Paris to Noirmoutier to announce that.

The leader of the deputation produced the memorandum and tried shortly to summarise what was in it. The dry man interrupted after five minutes:

‘Don’t go into details. I am only interested in the general sense of it.’

The general sense. . . .

Our speaker folded up the paper and remarked drily himself:

‘If Monsieur l’Envoyé is in such a hurry I have nothing more to say.’

At that the commissioner relaxed after all. He explained

what a great deal of work he had to do and how many places he had to visit.

'Please,' he added, 'hand me your complaints in writing, and if you have anything more to say, say it in a few words.'

The Administrator was walking up and down behind the commissioner's back, his hand covering his jowl, ceaselessly stroking his little moustache, and he was smiling a little with satisfaction at the reception. The leader of the deputation said in French in a louder voice:

'It is the request of every one of us that you intervene to have us sent away from here, anywhere, to Hell, but away from here.'

The smile vanished from the Administrator's face. The American was about to say something, but the deputation turned and went out of the room. After that the American gentleman was soon forgotten, and ever afterwards the Administrator was emphasising that if we showed such a lively desire to get away from Noirmoutier he would help us. But he did not think much good would come of it.

Now that the Germans were being sent to Ile d'Yeu we were convinced the Administrator had been up to mischief. Only later we learnt that the reason was something quite different. The Inspector-General who had had the stove put in my room and had declared Nos. 1 and 2, where the Germans lived, to be unfit for human habitation, had set about having them evacuated. When the Germans had gone those rooms were locked and given over to their rightful owners, the rats and mice and the all-invading mould.

Before the "Lights Out" call that evening we all gathered in the Germans' rooms. There was nothing else but the mattresses there, for they had packed up all their belongings. Von Bergen emerged from the smoke and seized on me: he had to tell me of the latest turn in his affairs. The Russian girl had come: for the last week he had seen her every day, had been able to exchange a word or two with her: she had

come after him to Noirmoutier. That was why he had been informed she had disappeared from Paris. The police there had constantly made unpleasantness for her because of her correspondence with him. So the girl decided to slip away to Noirmoutier. Dressed as an old peasant woman she had waited all day on the road where the prisoners' water-cart came three times daily. For weeks she waited in vain for Von Bergen. Then one day he came. He could not stand the confinement any longer, and for something to do he decided to go and fetch water every day.

The first time he went out he noticed the old woman looking at him curiously and holding out her hand as though begging. The second time he gave her a bit of bread and the old woman slipped a letter into his hand. From the letter he learnt everything. After that they had seen each other every day without anyone knowing about it. They could not talk, but they could always pass letters to one another.

I could imagine the lovers: the German sculptor, tortured by a flaming desire, pulling the water-cart along the road, his figure tall and gaunt above the shafts, almost flying as he came near the girl. As though with a last, superhuman effort he wanted to heave himself clear of the morass threatening to engulf him. His love seared the air separating them to fling itself on the girl till her limbs under the ragged peasant's dress trembled in the ecstasy of that frenzied, incorporeal embrace. Every day they wrote twenty or thirty letters to one another, living only for the moment when they could see each other.

The girl had early written to him that he too was to be transferred to Ile d'Yeu. Von Bergen was beaming. He was the only one under whose loud farewell talk there was not an undercurrent of fear.

Wine was being passed round. Bismarck's red-cheeked, grinning face bobbed up. We exchanged addresses. Only then I learnt that his name was Lekan.

'You mark my words,' he said by way of farewell. 'After

the Russians and Serbs, the French. We shall flatten them out as well, and then—the end of the War!’

The noise increased, the smoke grew thicker, glasses clinked. Everybody was saying good-bye to the Germans: to Wachsmann, the barber with the scented beard; slippered, soft-footed Däumler, who had been famous ever since Péri-gueux for getting more letters than anyone else; hook-nosed, tail-coated Hacke; fat, shiny-faced, alcoholic Bürger; weedy, brokenly elegant Fuchs; blond Tienemann and his puffy friend Georges; Max and Markus and Von der Hohe and Biesenbach; Brunner, who had been Däumling’s servant; and then all the broad-shouldered, quarrelsome dockers and workmen. With some of them I was shaking hands for the first time.

They sang the “Deutschland über alles,” standing stiff and bellowing out the words. Then they lay down, and the smoke billowed out of the rooms as though all the pain and sad memory of the time spent there had been burnt up and destroyed.

We began preparing for Christmas early in December. Zádory and I made a model of a church, with stained-glass windows and snow and shepherds outside it. It took a long time and much trouble. We were to give it for a present to Madame Mignale’s little daughter.

The canteen proprietress had always been very kindly inclined towards us, and just then had been giving us smiling hints that she had a surprise in store for us. We asked if it was very, very big, and a terrible flash of hope passed our minds. ‘Oh, not as big as all that.’ It turned out that the order had come permitting us French papers to read. It was the result of an agreement made with Germany.

The pleasure did not amount to much. At first we scrambled for the papers. We arranged for everyone to order a different one. Maravics’ tower-room became a

perfect reading-room. Its owner started on a furious study of the various battlefields. He bought an enormous map and pegged out the positions of the troops with little flags, moving them every day according to the news. But we soon grew disappointed in the papers. There was nothing but the War in them, and even the more serious papers were full of exaggerations and misrepresentations and abuse. The papers in our own country were probably writing the same stuff. After a week we no longer bothered to read them, except when there was something very important, or if someone discovered an obscure paragraph about the interned civilians—then there would be a hopeful rush for the paper concerned. Later not even that roused any interest.

But we did not tell Madame Mignale.

We wanted to hold the Christmas-Eve banquet in the canteen. The Administrator gave orders that the celebrations were to be over by eight o'clock and that everyone was to be in bed by nine. The year before the men were shouting "*Hoch, Deutschland!*" late into the night, and singing the "*Marseillaise*" with the soldiers. The Administrator's orders were against every sort of demonstration.

So we planned the lighting-up of the twig Christmas-tree for six o'clock, then a Hungarian supper in the canteen-room and the presentation to Madame Mignale.

But we needed money. Last year my old class had collected quite a large sum for the Hungarian Christmas, and this year it had not yet come. No letters came at all. The Swiss Red Cross had used to arrange the transmittance of money through a Genevan banking-house, but since the Germans left the post hardly brought us anything at all. Every morning the eldest Stocker, who was room-president of No. 3, came back empty-handed from the post-room.

I was becoming uneasy not only on account of the money but even more because of the lack of letters. My father used to write regularly from my home town. And I had brothers at the front. By Christmas I was in such a state of nervous

expectancy that every morning when the call announcing the post rang out I went out of my tower-room into No. 3 and waited there for Stocker. To go down into the yard would have been too confident an advance and would have spoilt my luck. On the day before Christmas Eve the letter from my old head-master and the money from the school arrived. It was a long, kind letter. I was morbidly stubborn in my surprise that the community from which I had been violently parted should yet concern itself with me. But the letter reassured me doubly, for there was no mention of trouble at home, and my head-master would have known if anything had happened. So we could have our Christmas Eve.

There we were at the table of the canteen, all in our best clothes. Only Varga was not there. He had been sent home with a weak heart. After Christmas news came that a couple of weeks after he reached home he died. It was little Feldenczer, who had visited him in hospital, who wrote. The younger Weiner was not there, either. He had been put into the cells for fighting. His brother besought the Administrator until he was allowed to take him his Christmas supper and his presents.

Old Müller was again at the head of the table, and beside him the elders, Vantur, Bistrán and Horváth. There were more of us now than the year before. Rubin, Zádory, Bárczy, Lakatos, Kopolovits, Valery and Ványi and all the later arrivals were new to our Christmas table.

Bárczy ate nothing. He had been starving now for months, or eating only the most impossible things, so that his face was become whiter than the chalk dissolved in vinegar which was part of his diet. He was preparing for the medical examination. He knew that if the examination came late he would pay for it with his life.

We lit up the Christmas-tree and the little church, and then Madame Mignale's Marie came in, dressed in black, her brown eyes shining with excitement. Her mother stood beside her, and held her close. We began to sing carols. As

we were singing the Administrator came in, and with his hands behind his back strutted heavily up and down the room. No one took any notice of him and presently he went away. The supper lasted till eight o'clock, and then the "Lights Out" bugle sounded.

We went out in silence into the yard, for we had to cross half its length to the way up into the keep. Each man was walking as though he were alone, and did not talk to the others. It only lasted till the dark throat of the entrance swallowed us up, and the clanging door dispersed the magic.

The accumulation of letters at Christmas, the censor, the Red Cross holiday week, all that was no longer valid. If there had been a letter from my school there should be one from home. The days passed and nothing came. Stocker grew afraid of meeting me with empty hands, as every morning I went out into No. 3 to see the post come. I was afraid and uneasy, and found myself lying on my mattress all day, not thinking nor wanting to think of anything.

Maravics invited us to his room on the evening of Christmas Day. His mother in Vienna had sent him a parcel. There were such things in it to eat as we knew now only from memory. The crown of it all was a litre of egg-punch.

We gathered in Maravics' tower-room. The good things were all laid out on the table and Maravics had prepared some mulled wine. The party consisted of Németh, Lakatos, Zádory, myself and the inevitable gypsy Horváth with his violin.

We had not touched a thing when we quarrelled. Zádory made some coarse remark about guzzling, Maravics answered sharply. They quarrelled, as they had done often enough. They would probably quickly have been reconciled if I had not chosen to intervene. I took Zádory's side and attempted to reprove Maravics for lecturing a guest who was older than

he merely because he enjoyed the temporary advantage of having money while Zádory had none.

That squabble seemed to open in me unnoticed the flood-gates of accumulated bitterness and despair. I was myself astonished: who was this speaking in such trembling agony? The squabble had been only an excuse. But I could not stop. I said terrible things to those men, and when at last I got up the others went too, and the show of food and drink on the table was still untouched. Only old Horváth stayed. He had listened to it all un-understandingly and with a sort of superior indifference; like a great, battered grey bird which in all the world only the magic of food could hold.

There was an end to the evening. I went to my room and lay down, staring wide-eyed into the air, searching for something that might explain to me what was the matter.

The next day at noon Zádory came down to me carrying a big parcel, a Christmas present from his faithful French mistress, Mastic. Zádory squatted on the edge of my mattress and opened the basket.

'Look, raw ham, good Tours sausage. The best thing in the world. Little Mastic has sent it, bless her!' The big man's face was beaming pathetically with emotion and pleasure. I smiled and leant over the parcel. It was covered with pine-twigs. Then I started back.

'No, no! It smells of coffins!'

The silence shut down again, and I was lost in a great, terrifying emptiness which told me nothing and only stared down on me in threatening dumbness.

Maravics' entertainment was eventually fixed for New Year's Eve. The boy had come to apologise to me, though he had hardly committed a fault. Perhaps of us all his nerves were most strained by imprisonment. He put a brave face on it. He was the son of an old father and a very young mother. Threadbare nerves and a whole quantity of immature, childish qualities. He liked to adopt a fatherly

attitude towards the far older Andor Németh, and to discipline and train old Edward, who was somewhat of a drunkard. He himself spent all day smoking his pipe, browsing in his books of genealogy and latterly making a collection of all the hair-raising inventions of the French newspapers. He had an elderly, exaggeratedly conservative view of everything, but if one took his pipe out of his mouth and drew him away from his work one found an ingenuous child, very good-hearted and much in need of someone to give him some direction and make a man out of him. That was how he was when he came to apologise and ask me to come to his New Year's feast.

New Year's Eve was no excuse for our being allowed up after eight o'clock in the evening, but Maravics circumvented this regulation. He had Edward put one of the top tower-rooms in some order, and we were convened to slip up there after the guard had done the night round.

At nine o'clock everybody was in bed. The guard's smoky lantern passed through the darkened rooms, its weak beam falling on one prisoner's face after the other. The straw mattresses rustled. Here and there came a sound of movement, a sigh. The lantern light skipped from one face to another. The officious corporal even peeped behind the curtains. Now he was just passing Dr. Herz'.

Then they came to us. Lantern light on a death-mask face. They left No. 3. The sound of their steps came from the wooden stairs, No. 5, then No. 6. At last the little flicker of light ran again along the stairs, the little tower court, the way down. A last pale gleam shot up to our windows as the guard were down below, then darkness was total in the keep building.

I got up from my mattress cautiously and peered out of the tower-room's little window into the yard.

In the light of the full moon the Administrator was walking up and down between the little building of the Administration and the guard-house, looking searchingly at the darkened,

silent keep. He must have felt the whole fortress was one stubborn will straining against him. What was inside there, behind the silence and the pretended peace?

A slight sound from the direction of the keep, and he stopped suspiciously. Might it not be the secret password of conspiracy against his life, whispering through the thick walls? At one of the windows something white moved, as though threatening him. Watching, he crept towards the keep building. No, the white thing was only a shirt hung out to dry, flapping a little in the breeze off the sea.

He went off towards the gate, but as he went out he turned round once again and looked over the keep. There may have been a smile on his face.

I picked up my shoes, slipped out of the tower-room and through No. 3. I was to meet the others on the part of the winding stairs that led to the roof.

Edward was waiting for us at the iron-bound door to the roof. He checked us off as we stepped out into the moonlight: '*Die Professoren* (that meant Soltész, Németh and Neufeld), *Herr Säüfer* (the "Drunkard" was Dudás), *und du auch, Luder*'—this last remark being addressed to Zádory, who brought up the rear with the gypsy Horváth.

The keep walls were about half a metre higher than the roof-tiles. We crawled on all-fours along the narrow path between the wall and the roof to the tower-attic where Maravics' feast was to be. The host, his short, blue-glowing pipe in his mouth, was waiting for us inside the door.

A strange reception-room, and strange guests.

In the round attic two straw mattresses were placed end to end. In the middle of the room stood a little portable oil-stove, a beam of light from its red-glassed opening falling on a section of the mould-streaked wall. At one place above the beams the sloping roof was so broken in that a fair-sized gap appeared and through it a piece of the blue sky looked in, with in its lap two twinkling stars. That far, metallic piece of sky seemed the attic's ornament; perhaps for centuries

no human being had been there. Seeing it we felt the height into which the tower's point jutted.

While Edward had been putting the place in order that afternoon he had come upon a hawk's nest in one of the corners of the roof, and had grabbed the two young ones out of it. Now they were sitting in front of the stove, tearing at the bloody bits of meat thrown to them. Along the wall were ranged wine and champagne glasses and the remaining tinned things from Maravics' parcel. Above them hung the human arm-bone which had been found by someone in the cellar with its fetters still on it. The owner of this was Edward; he had lent it to his master for the better ornamentation of the evening.

We admired the young hawks and praised Edward's stylish arrangement.

The old glass-blower was just like a gnome. His eyes shone strangely in the lamplight, his toothless mouth was like a baby's, his drooping, weedy moustache and the hair invading his face making it a still stranger sight. He was a great dresser. He was wearing a red tie, a cast-off dinner-jacket of Maravics' and a pair of rough, creased brown trousers, the ends of which were stuffed into enormous, straw-filled clogs. His spectacles threatened every moment to slither off the bridge of his little snub-nose. They too were like a bad bit of theatrical make-up on him.

We had to talk quietly, almost whispering, so we were none too hilarious for a while. Everyone was more concerned with the food and drink. Each man received a glass and plate, Edward wiping them for each course with a perfectly filthy rag. But after the first glasses spirits rose. The talkers forgot that out of superfluous caution they ought to have whispered. Dudás was in his element. He had mastered the art of drinking long ago, in his home county. In a few minutes he had completely forgotten his surroundings, the fact of imprisonment, and was pulling the corks from the wine-bottles with the knife he had inherited from

his father as if he were host again in his own country, never failing to pour himself the first few drops of the bottle, criticising, approving.

Dudás held the floor till drink got the better of him, and then Zádory took on his part. He was more than merely cheerful, for he had a soaring imagination. There was no misery to which he could not find a good side, and nothing strange or foreign to him with which he could not come to terms. He had already tamed the young hawks and they were dozing in his lap. He had eaten half the food and drunk glass for glass with Dudás. His fantasy was on fire. He told us the story of the fettered arm-bone till we almost saw the cowed monk to whom he attributed it. He widened the hole in the roof and soared away on the star-path to the town on the banks of the Körös where he had spent his childhood.

We had become memories. The group of us fading in the tobacco smoke became a magic shadowiness from which the figures of memory trooped out. We were old. That mad, incomprehensible night when in the garden of the little Breton bathing-place I had taken leave not of a woman but of Woman, was already for me in the coloured, hazy distance of a childhood. And backwards from that everything was a-glitter in the light of the golden age that to old men their childhood is. Behind me grew the splendid trail of memories stretching into infinity till I became a tiny nothing that could hardly bear its great ornament. Then I tried to imagine my home. But they had moved into a new house, and it was difficult. Father, brothers, brother's bride and widowed sister. But that all meant anxiety and the emptiness as though everything, even the air, had drawn away from me, and something had gathered above my head which would soon strike down.

All the time the others were utterly absorbed in their revival of past things. The dimly-lit attic was so filled with tobacco smoke that the speakers' faces were hidden from each other. Only now and again a movement or the line of a face

was to be seen. Their memories were more living than themselves.

Dudás remembered a dandy of the Bácska. They had been in a deal of scrapes together. The boy was not a bully, but he had Hungarian blood in him. He did not like Jews, aristocrats, intellectuals, officers—in short there was a good deal he did not like—and he was as touchy about his honour as a girl about her ball-shoes. It was at a ball that the provincial cavalier's career came to an end. Having in his life smacked a good many men's faces, this time he smacked his pretty sister's for having permitted her partner, a creamy-mouthed junior lieutenant of Hussars, to kiss her hair. That caused a great scandal. The hot-blooded Bácska dandy smacked eight other Hussar officers' faces one after another, after which epic deed he had just enough time left him in the little home town to work off the consequent duels and then go off and serve a rich relation as estate agent. And Dudás went to Paris, to Blériot.

And so it went on. Németh talked of a mistress, and Neufeld of his apprenticeship in Northern Hungary. Zádory was in his element, capping everybody's stories. He told us how, when he was scarcely twenty years old, he had covered the distance from Nagyvárad to Paris, how he had come to Rodin's studio and pre-War Bohemian Paris with its God, long-bearded Maître Desbois, France's second sculptor after Rodin.

The hours passed and the ghosts crowded thicker in the little attic.

Maravics told Edward to set out the champagne; Dudás would have no one but himself wrap Edward's grimy rag round the bottle's neck.

The drink was foaming into the high glasses and chipped tumblers when in the near-by church the first deep boom of the New Year peal rang out. The church tower was on the same level as the keep tower, and the bells must have been hung as near as might be to us: one might have thought that

by putting out a hand through one of the cracks one could have touched them. We had not thought of that at all, and when the first clang banged out we jumped for fright. After the three first deep strokes the other bells joined in, and soon the whole attic was quivering in every joint from the surrounding metal's triumphant chorus. It seemed the tower swung and like a huge bell-clapper struck the metal of the blue sky-vault. And with the swaying tower we swung in a deafening cauldron of sound where an aimless, endless, inscrutable order of rhythm flung great blind forces to strike and break against each other. Our glasses clinked together with a little grinding noise, and would not separate.

The noise slowly died down. When the last clang had died away the tower suddenly became empty, as though the whole world had fled from it. We looked at each other with queer, frightened smiles; then we drained our glasses and sat down.

Only Dudás stood still in the middle of the room. The glass still trembled in his hand, and half the drink had spilled on the ground. He looked round him with staring, blood-shot eyes, in the despairing helplessness of a madman searching for the first time in the monstrous world of his brain. Then he raised his glass above his head and with all his strength smashed it to the ground.

'Drinking to it, when I ought to be fighting. When I am an officer,' he shouted, his mind suddenly swept by a rush of rage. 'I've had enough of it. You see! I've had enough.'

The sculptor grabbed him to prevent him rushing out onto the roof.

At that moment someone thumped on the door.

Edward, who never lost his presence of mind, put out the oil-lamp.

We stayed in deathly silence, only our quick breathing audible. It was as though someone were treading on us, pressing us down against the ground in a last struggle. Who was coming?

The door quietly opened, and in the light of the moon stood out the bent figure of mad Demeter Bistrán.

How he got there we had no idea. The old man loved mysterious ways. When there was a moon he used to climb about all night, and on one of his nocturnal rounds he must have discovered that the iron-bound door was open, and so had climbed out onto the roof.

Maravics invited him in with no enthusiasm. Edward lit the oil-lamp again and we all looked questioningly at Brother Demeter.

Bistrán peered about him, looking out of the corner of his eye at the young hawks, the champagne bottles and especially the fettered arm-bone. When he saw that he lifted his bushy, grey-streaked beard high. He knew what was going on here! Then he twirled his moustache, pulled his cap with the three looking-glass buttons over his eyes and silently nodded. With his pale, pock-marked face and his shabby fur-collared coat he looked like a queer figure stepped out of a rag-bag of stories, the enchanted lord of that ancient, grimy fortress.

He gestured with a raised forefinger, then said in a whisper: 'Brothers! Eh? Brothers. . . Don't deny it. I know the sign: the hawk and the fettered bone. I have just come at the right time. Only just now I have been talking to Apponyi. He gave me a sign with the lit end of his cigar, because otherwise I should not have seen him in the dark. Apponyi says that all the money-aristocrats and the philosophers and all the b——s who made the War are done for. So now we go uphill and can laugh. At the top of the hill is the Candle, our Candle, that the aristocrats made that pretty Klara Enyedi steal from me. Apponyi said "Up, Brothers, forward with the degree." His degree is a dove in his throat, but mine is the Hammer. Here is the Hammer in my hand. Do you see it, Brothers?'

Demeter lifted up his right hand, swung his whole body after it and then struck down with all his strength.

Panting, and with absolute contentment, he declared:

'Now it is all over. I have struck with it. The seal is broken. The seal of suffering. You can go, it is all over. . . . I, Demeter Bistrán, say you are free!'

The light of madness was in the shabby figure's eyes. We watched him with staring eyes. No one moved.

Zádory came to himself. He handed a glass filled with wine to that frightening old man.

'Drink it, old fellow. You speak like a prophet.'

Bistrán accepted the drink, wiped his moustache with his dirty red handkerchief and then remarked confidentially:

'I am a prophet, but I will drink the wine.'

The spell was broken. We all laughed.

Edward tried to profit from the moment to hustle Brother Demeter out.

But the old man pushed him away:

'Tell this Austrian glass-blower I am going directly. But first I am going to sing you a song.'

'What are you talking about?' interrupted Maravics in a fright. 'You'll fetch the whole guard up.'

'Don't be afraid, no one hears this, except I sing it to him. I only hum, and you look me in the eyes, and even if I am not singing you will think many people are singing. Listen'—and he began to sing an old Hungarian peasant song.

One could scarcely hear the words. It was the singer's pose, his hand raised, his earnestness that seized us. His battered, emaciated face with its traces of the Hussar still apparent slowly turned from one to another of us, swaying in the reddish light like a vision. We listened with sunk heads, suddenly serious, and seeing with terrible vividness many pictures. The Bácska boy leant on one of the straw mattresses, buried his face in his hands and sobbed.

When Brother Demeter had finished his song he looked round the room once more, smiled at us and made to go. He stopped on the threshold, turned round, straightened up and spoke again with the voice of a prophet:

'Don't be sad. I have already told you, you are free.'

Then the door shut behind him.

In the room there only remained Horváth's softly played violin in his memory. The gypsy's sallow face was leant over his instrument, and in spite of Maravics' prohibition he went on playing and playing sad and merry songs as though it were not he who played but the violin of itself.

We went on drinking and argued about whether Brother Demeter was quite mad or whether there was some calculation in his words, some torn fragment of a folk-myth.

Zádory flared up and swore that every word of Bistrán's was pure wisdom. He was drunk. His voice went on and on, splashing like the water of a lake, trampling like horses' hooves, weeping, begging, triumphing, snapping like a rifle, while all the time his sculptor's hand moulded in the smoky air figures and visions that he cast from him to a distance so that he could admire them.

But I listened only half-consciously, for a change was taking place in me. My agglomerated depression of weeks, that desolate emptiness, suddenly dissolved in a weeping pain. Quite near me a new life and a new world were unfolding. They had long been there, but I had never felt them so clearly.

Then I was face to face with myself.

I stood there in my ragged green coat all damp with mould. I was so clearly and sharply visible that I even counted the once luxuriously big buttons on my coat: there were only three left, and one of those was only a half and the two others were of different colours. From under my cap tilted over my eyes I looked at myself.

So that was myself, that pitiable pauper. That was my life: what had been was not much, and what was now was indeed most bitter. What still was to come? A few emotions, a few illusions, a few thoughts. A more beautiful sky over me? A few blossoms, and petals fall in any case. Life was a sad thing, even if lived out. Even the most beautiful life was only a martyrdom, a penance for an unknown sin.

That meeting with myself lasted, I think, only a few moments, and in that time I grew quite old. The other men were applauding the sculptor's toast to the real "I" of a thousand forms; and among them I was the only one who knew, as I stared dim-eyed after the dissolving vision of my own being, that their real "I" was a dead "I" now, comforting itself in the search of a pleasure, free to wander in the world of imagination, yet never to stray back to the fields of pure contentment.

CHAPTER XIII

NEWS OF DEATH

THAT day, too, as I had done for a month, I went out into No. 3 when the bugle-call sounded announcing the post. It was January 10th. Exactly five weeks since I had had a letter from home. Such a long delay could mean nothing but something bad, though the chain of days had grown so infinitely long that I had lost all sense of time.

They were just finishing clearing up in No. 3. The black-faced Tirolese gypsy was sprinkling the floor with dilute disinfectant from a bottle and grinningly splashing it now and again at Poss, who, wearing his ancient green hat with the tuft of hog's bristles, was walking up and down the room learning English words by heart. Through the open windows an indifferent, clouded sky looked in. From the yard came the clumping of hurrying clogs. Men were calling out, running, as though some accident had happened and in the mist they could not see anything.

The clatter of clogs outside on the stairs. The room-presidents were coming. The eldest Stocker was smiling. He brandished a letter in his hand and shouted from far away: '*Nur für Herrn Kuncz!*'

I took the letter, my first thought should I run out into the tower-room with it and there read in peace all that was in it? But the Red Cross envelope was already open. In it was a letter from my brother, on black-edged paper. Round me the room stopped breathing. Now I was face to face with it. It would be far better to throw away the letter, run away out of here, out of time, out of life before I could learn anything. But I was holding the letter in my hand and staring

at the first lines: 'Father's funeral took place on December 11th with a great following of people from the town. . . .'

It stabbed me straight, like an arrow, with no intervention of my consciousness. A terrible whining weeping rose in me. I heard it. And everything round me startled up. For a moment the walls, the hanging clothes, the opened windows and the cloudy sky looked at me in amazement. The other men got up dumbly.

Then I found myself in the tower-room, and the letter before me. Only then did I read it through. It spoke of my father's funeral but not a word of the circumstances of his death. I had never received that letter. I had thought of everything else but this. Now I had to make myself believe he was no longer there, was already buried.

I think I sat alone, thinking of nothing and doing nothing, for weeks. Sometimes Zádory, Soltész or Andor Németh came to see me and by main force took me out to walk in the yard. Otherwise I simply sat there, and sometimes I shivered.

At the end of January I went to the church, for the first time since the news. I sat in the front row among the Tirolese. The church slowly began to fill with light. At another time I would have rejoiced at the coming of the light. Now I did not heed it.

Then the bells rang out, and I think I suddenly trembled. I had not heard bells since New Year's Eve, when the nearness of their clashing had frightened us. Now they were different. I did not myself know what had happened, but I knew that something had snapped within me. As if in the deathly silence in which I had lived since the news a far-away, scarcely audible sound had reached me. The little, wood-carved, blue-robed Virgin was there, and I suppose had been there all the time, as it were my mother. They had rung bells at my mother's funeral, when I was a child of five.

I never dared ask in a letter how my father had died. I did

not want to, nor indeed could I set to imagining about his death. Five years later my brother told me he had died from an inflammation of the lungs.

Towards the end of January suddenly more letters arrived, as though they had been held back to let my brother's letter come alone. No one mentioned my father's death, but the letters were very kind.

There were among the rest letters from Spain, from Révész and Orbok, both of whom had succeeded in escaping from France into Spain, the one by the help of his friends and the other by the help of little Jeanette, who had run with us that day to Morlaix.

Such letters only increased our restlessness and impatience to escape from Ch——'s tortures. After the Germans' going there were constant rumours that we too were to move. We hoped we should go to a more bearable place. There we were wrong.

One day towards the end of January the room-presidents came along with a list of twelve names. Orders for twelve of the prisoners to pack by dawn the next day, for they were to be sent to another internment camp.

A glance at the list was enough to show us that the Administrator was carrying out his revenge by this deportation. Everyone was on it who in the last months had in any way come into conflict with him.

At the head of the list were the names of the men who had written to the Prefect about the Administrator being drunk and wanting to shoot down one of the prisoners: Popper, Maravics, Neufeld, Schnitta, Weiffert and the Budapest banker's son. With the rest the Administrator had had personal dispute. First of all, Zádory. Partly because of the inscription on Jungblut's gravestone, when he had such a fierce encounter with the Administrator, partly because of the letters he used to write to Mastic, in which he would refer to the Administrator as a "blubberly hog," who to the greater glory of the French nation allowed to rot among rats

and bugs and lice and mould all the innocents who had been lured to Paris by admiration of French culture.

Then came Fenyvesi, who had several times had words with the Administrator about his treatment of the men. In front of all the room-presidents he had passed in review all the means to physical and moral suffering which Ch—— had discovered for the aggravation of our situation—bad enough in any case—and when the little, raging engineer had told him everything, he finished off with his favourite phrase—“*D’un point c’est tout.*” As though that were only one point of view.

We Hungarians were most struck. Of the twelve deportees ten were Hungarians. The rest of the list consisted of the two Weiners, Menardi the handsome young Tirolese, and lastly Kopolovits the one-time page-boy of the Hazám, who had told the Administrator to choke in his own blubber. In the evening the news spread that they were being sent to one of the worst Breton punishment camps, where the notorious *têtes de forts* were confined.

The whole evening we were round our friends while they packed, meeting them here, there and everywhere. We gave them our food-reserves, hidden tins of milk, our sugar. My poor old deaf watchmaker friend Weiner, packing and fumbling with his ragged socks, Cubist pictures and occult books, found all among the jumble a kilo tin of jam, a box of sugar and a tin of sardines. He thought he was dreaming. He tried to pass it on to his bad-tempered neighbour, Sedlar. We had to make him keep it. He remembered his dog, Lolo. He went off to Lolo’s grave to say good-bye, and then lay down on his patched blanket in the ante-room, under the smoky oil-lamp, because he had no mattress any more, and there he passed the night, all curled up and swaddled in his blanket like some old, ragged, flung-down rug. His brother stood beside him. His sick face glowed with the Jews’ martyr-blood. His eyes were shining and he spoke of still greater sufferings to come as if of an infinite happiness.

Zádory was distributing his grey clay loving-couples. He could not possibly take them with him. He stroked a last time with his long, thick fingers the twining limbs of the little figures. He said he would ask for them back again, if he could carve them in marble. He was a different sight now from what he was a year before, when he had come in through the gate of the Black Monastery and asked for a room looking out on the sea. He was wearing creased, stained workman's trousers, a plain blue sweater and a very much mended coat. His once good overcoat was not over his arm. He had slept in it, wrapped himself in it against cold and damp, and now it was flung over his shoulder as if he were taking it to a jumble-sale. He had grown a beard and his hair was shaggy. He had turned into a real *tête de fort*. His waistcoat pockets were full of the little bits of bone which he used to pick up in the yard and on which he carved out his wonderful visions.

Popper was declaiming and orating, as fiery and as bitter as ever. He had seen with his own eyes mothers, after weeks in open cattle-trucks, with their babies dead at their empty breasts. He had been in the camp where the children had died by tens and twenties, daily, without doctors or medical help. He could not forget, he did not want to understand. Let them just send him among criminals and murderers. All the better, they at least were readier for a bloody satisfaction.

Maravics was giving his last instructions to Edward. He carefully packed up and entrusted to him the sheaves of incredibilities he had cut out of the French newspapers, all the disgusting nonsense of the War Press. Cynical old Edward took off his half-spectacles, which he wore like a monocle, and wiped at his eyes with a bit of black rag. His only reproach against his beloved master was why he did not let him sign his own name as well to that denouncement.

At dawn the little group of deportees assembled in the tower court. On the broad stones stood the Administrator's latrine-tubs, crooked and wobbling as though any moment

about to fall over. On the crumbling parapet the sentry marched wearily up and down. Everything was grey and dirty. The eastern edge of the sky lit up pale pink.

The men came out, all sleepy and with straw-stubs sticking in their hair. Their teeth chattered in the sharp air of dawn. The Tirolese were round Menardi: a young, whiskered, curly-haired, boy-faced fellow. They were seizing his hand, stroking his arm—'*Lieber Gott, du kommst auch weg*' was all they could keep on saying, as though they had just woken to the reality of it in that desolate dawn.

Maravics came, his face gleaming. Popper's truculent voice said loudly, 'If anyone can stay Francophile after this he ought to have his neck wrung.' Weiner came out like an animated ghost, his brother proudly arm-in-arm with that ruin of a man. Kopolovits looked as if he were just returning from a night out. Someone had given him a bowler hat, and he was swaggering along as though he were merely going from the Hazám to the Turkish Baths. Schnitta faultlessly dressed as usual, the Austrian waiters crowding round him. Zádory all over carved bits of bone, and promising more. To Weiffert and the Budapest banker's son it was Bárczy who said good-bye; Bárczy who was now nothing but skin and bone. Neufeld was standing gloomily between Soltész and Németh. The thin, invalid-looking man had been the Administrator's most reckless opponent. Now he looked as though he were wondering whether his strength would last.

The sound of Horváth's violin came, and Dudás appeared arm-in-arm with Fenyvesi. They had been friends in Paris, and in internment they had worked together a great deal drawing plans. Between them, too, they had worked out plans for a motorless aeroplane. Dudás had just received permission from the Prefect to make a model in wood. The Administrator's revenge was taking from him his friend and his collaborator at once.

Dudás stopped the little engineer under the arch of the

entrance. He settled himself rocking a little on his splendid, green-spatted bow-legs. He wanted to say something. A warm, memorable good-bye. But he could think of nothing else than to repeat with ever-increasing, more inarticulate emotion:

‘Go your way. . . . Go your way. . . .’

A movement began in the tower court. The soldiers shouted up from the main yard that it was time to start.

We wanted to go down with them at least to the big yard. But only the deportees were let through the crack of the open door. A great commotion set up on the narrow stairs. Dudás broke away to talk to the corporal, to see if he might persuade him to relent. He was holding a big bottle of eau-de-Cologne and sprinkling each man as he went out.

‘*Monsieur le Caporal!*’ he said, and pummelled on the door. ‘*Monsieur, Monsieur!*’

The door opened a little.

‘My best friend is going away,’ said Dudás in French, and sprinkled the corporal from his bottle. Apparently when he was drunk he could bear the smell of the man less.

But neither scented water nor good words were of any use. The Administrator had given strict orders to let no one but the deportees down into the yard. He was afraid of a demonstration.

We all crowded to the windows and balcony of the keep. From here we saw the others being lined up; armed soldiers round them. The little party started. Deadly, anxious silence. The gate opened, and they turned round once more. Then a terrific shouting broke out. We shouted victorious ‘*Hoch’s*,’ but the shout sounded more like a fearful screaming as though a piece were being cut from a living body.

CHAPTER XIV

ROADS OF ESCAPE

IN the days following the departure of the deportees more of us left Noirmoutier. Lakatos managed through his connections to be sent to a family camp, and later he reached Switzerland with a sick-convoy. It was becoming more and more of a strain to feel ourselves held back for ever in Noirmoutier as though we had been completely forgotten.

At the same time the young Czech boy went too. Dr. Herz for days spoke to no one and answered no one. He thought of committing suicide, but luckily he had no means of doing so, for the roof whence he wanted to hurl himself down was carefully shut off from him. Jeroslav had left without saying good-bye. One morning there was only his empty place behind the rose-patterned curtain.

At the beginning of February a French wine-merchant of the name of Coulinot received permission to sell wine during the afternoon in the fortress cellar. He probably owed this concession to having been a drinking companion of the Administrator's, but he was not in the least like the latter. We soon realised that he was no narrow-minded man of hate, and that if perhaps his first thought had been that the Boches were there to be profited from, later, when he saw that these *têtes carrées* of whom the Administrator recounted such awful things were like any other men, only somewhat more pitiable, he began to take a liking to us, and not only never profiteered at our expense but sometimes even lost money. He was a prosperous, family-less man of over sixty who was very bored in little Noirmoutier. His wine dispensation came as a godsend to him in that it brought him into contact

with travelled men and gave him the opportunity of long evening talks on more interesting subjects than could be discussed with the Administrator, Palvadoz and the village elders.

He won us over in the very first week by his very chivalrous behaviour to certain of our fellows. Coulinot had installed several large barrels of wine in the cellar, and a drunkard of an Austrian seaman called Buchholz, his friend, Salz by name, with Sedlar and the few Hungarian inhabitants of No. 4, among them the two carpenters Valery and Ványi, devised the plan one night of tearing up a plank in the floor of the disused No. 1, dropping down into the cellar and there tapping one of Coulinot's barrels. They continued this theft for several nights running, Buchholz very generously organising a second, entirely gratuitous wine dispensation, the benefits of which were enjoyed by the whole of Nos. 3 and 4 and several initiates from the upper rooms.

Coulinot of course soon noticed that his wines were disappearing in a remarkable manner. One night he locked himself in the cellar and caught Buchholz as he came sliding down from the hole in the floor of No. 1 on a rope contrived of shirts and bits of cloth knotted together. Coulinot's reckoning with the Austrian seaman lasted hours. Buchholz's companions up above were crazy with anxiety, and when at last his friend Salz, filled with the gloomiest forebodings, slid down after him into the cellar, he found his friend engaged in a cosy wine-bout with Coulinot, who himself had been a seaman in his young days and had discovered a wealth of reminiscence in common with Buchholz.

Coulinot made no fuss about the wine-stealing affair. He never said a word about it to the Administrator, and he even took on Buchholz as his "manager," so that if he so badly wanted to drink he could do it in peace without risking his life at it.

The wine-merchant's magnanimity of course had favourable consequences among the prisoners. The next day the

cellar filled with clients, and in a short time Coulinot's popularity grew to such an extent that poor Madame Mignale had to give up the sale of wine altogether.

It gradually became clear that Coulinot had made quite a good find in his new "manager." Buchholz had tables and benches made by his two Hungarian carpenter friends, Valery and Ványi: they hung up a couple of oil-lamps under the arches of the cellar. A strange *caveau des innocents* here in the vaulted cellar, with the dim light falling only on billowing tobacco smoke and the outlines of the chattering, arguing men. Sometimes rats squealed and rushed away under our feet, to be lost in the mysterious, far-reaching darkness of the cellar. The wine soon went to the heads of such weak, badly nourished men. Sometimes there would come a peal of eerie, uncheckable laughter distorted into the improbable cackle of a hysterical woman, as though retched up from the hoarse throat of some old tavern prostitute. In the dark corners drunken men embraced. They would begin with cheerful, friendly, somewhat emotional slaps on the back, then fall into each other's arms as though they were wrestling, till at last they flopped helplessly against the cellar walls where the damp trickled ghostily down like snail's slime.

From six o'clock in the afternoon there was music, which Fritz Labes and Horváth provided on the guitar and violin. Sometimes then Hampel would sing. The Czech had a beautiful voice. Once, leaning against the cellar's dark wall, he sang the Ave Maria, his luminously pale, black-bearded face like a vision of Christ.

One evening towards the end of February Ványi drew me aside into an empty corner saying he had something very important to discuss with me. Lately I had become better acquainted with Ványi and the other carpenter, as since my friends had left I often had an empty hour and the need to talk to someone. At that time there had lately arrived at Noirmoutier from the Luçon prison-camp, with two ladies'

tailors called Bertics and Lustig, an old tanner called Katz and a man called Wohlstein of uncertain profession. They maintained this clique in Noirmoutier and were so contented with each other that they never sought other company. They seemed all friendly enough, only old Katz was eternally grumbling, and the blue-bloused, flabby Wohlstein, who had no liking for washing, bored everyone with his eternal talk all going to prove what a fine gentleman he had been once upon a time, and how he had come down in the world all on account of a love-affair.

I visited them occasionally in No. 4 where they had set up a little workshop. Valery was the more serious of the two; he had a wife in Hungary. Ványi was a somewhat adventurous spirit, and it had been the tramping carpenter's Bohemian life that had brought him to Paris.

Now, too, with great secrecy he developed before me a dangerous venture. The fact of the matter was that they had concluded from Coulinot's talk and from an examination of the cellar that they could reach the secret underground passage out of the fortress only from the cellar of the tower-room where I lived. They had been preparing their escape for months. "The others" were the Austrian seaman Buchholz, Salz and Sedlar, from whose physical strength they were expecting a great deal. While on their walks they had marked down a fishing-vessel in a deserted part of the island's sardine harbour which was known as the *Herbau-dièrè*. The plan was to slip out here one night and escape in the boat to Spain. The voyage, especially in the Bay of Biscay, would be dangerous, but that responsibility the two seamen assumed. The journey might last weeks. But they already had provisions. Now all they had to do was to find the secret way out of the fortress. That was why I was necessary to them. So that was their question: Would I escape with them, and would I help them to find the underground passage?

Ványi's plan did not seem feasible to me. I knew some-

thing of the history of Noirmoutier. In a monograph on the place, which I had obtained through Madame Mignale, I had read that once there had been a secret passage under it to the church and even beyond it to the so-called Passage de Goua, where at ebb-tide it was possible to cross dry-shod to the mainland. According to my calculations that underground passage had to be at least ten kilometres long. It had probably still been used by the famous Royalist leader of the Vendée, Charette, who in 1794 was the master of Noirmoutier and had Wieland, the Republican leader, locked in the fortress of that place. We only needed the part of the tunnel leading out of the fortress. It was possible we might find it in the cellar under my room, especially if Ványi and Company's observations were correct, that there was a bricked-up entrance in the part of Coulinot's cellar just under my room.

I gave Ványi my hand without hesitation, promising to help carry out the scheme and not to betray anything of the preparations to anyone in the world. For the smallest chance of success we were ready to undertake any madness, even if it were at the risk of our lives.

We went straight off to the wine-cellar to make an examination of the spot and to discuss with Buchholz and his friends what my rôle was to be.

That evening Coulinot had a full house. At first I could hardly distinguish the faces in the dim light and thick smoke. Of each man only some one part was lit, the rest one had to guess. Fritz was playing his guitar. He was giving them his old repertoire about a Tirolese deserter and about a peasant-girl and her faithless lover. Coulinot was listening to the music with great enjoyment. He beckoned to me to come and sit beside him where he was at the head of a long rough-wood table. His face, or as much of it as showed for beard, was inflamed, and his brown eyes were unsteady and melting. Beside him sat Dudás, tasting the wine with the airs of an expert, squinting at its colour against the lamplight,

even rubbing some on his hands to test the alcohol content. They were just trying a new wine of M. Coulinot's. The wine-merchant was smiling and watching Dudás with great appreciation.

At Coulinot's table sat the *élite* of the Austrians: Reichsfeld, the plump Viennese banker's son, and his deer-eyed friend Ziffer. Weber of the physical exercises and cold baths, with his hands all reddish-blue, had just joined them.

With the departure of their German competitors the Austrian seamen had come to the fore. Their voices were loudest in the wine-cellar. Buchholz, his peaked cap on his head and a big white apron round his middle, made room for the new arrivals and took the orders. As he saw Ványi he winked at him with a blood-shot drunkard's eye and jerked his goat-beard in the direction where we were to sit.

Soon they called me away from Coulinot's table, and in a remote corner of the cellar, with our glasses round a candle stuck on a barrel, Buchholz, Salz, Sedlar, the two Hungarian carpenters and I drank to our friendship.

Except for the two Hungarians none of them was of an appearance to rouse much confidence. Buchholz sucked his teeth and grunted and sniffed and swallowed and seldom said anything decided. He held his gaze fixed on his own little, red, blobby nose, as though he wanted to avoid looking his fellow-conspirators in the face. Sometimes he would twist his beard up to touch his nose and through that uncouth bush of hairiness would say something none of us understood.

Salz was all cunning. It was probably his head that conceived the plan. The only trouble with the little, fat, clean-shaven man was that he smelt so abominably that one could scarcely sit beside him. He was supposed to be an expert at sailing; he had a little compass and had done the voyage from Nantes to the Spanish coast several times in his life. He explained the plan. We had two weeks to find the secret passage. We were to set off on February 20th, and reach the Spanish coast by the beginning of March.

Sedlar had collected the provisions. If he was to be believed he was in possession of a great quantity of smoked meat, bacon and tinned milk, besides a stove, the spirit for it, and half a sack of coffee.

'If everything goes off all right,' announced Salz, 'four weeks from to-day our friend Sedlar may be sitting in a pub in San Sebastian with a Spanish woman in his lap.'

'Shut your mouth,' said Sedlar hoarsely, and turned quite white. That was the only thing in the plan of escape that interested him, for he was driven half mad by desire.

We examined the cellar wall. It seemed really possible that the calculations might be right. Apparently it had not been considered necessary entirely to obliterate the outlines of the old opening. The arch of it was clearly visible above the heap of new stones in front of it. We might perhaps have drawn the line leading up to my floor one metre further in. But the tunnel was located without any doubt as being in the cellar of my room.

We swore each other to secrecy, and after agreeing to start work the next day we separated unostentatiously.

In the morning of the next day Ványi arrived in my room with the necessary tools under his coat. His thin face was paler than usual. With his coat-collar turned up and his cap pulled over his eyes he stood in my room looking about him uneasily. Anyone could have seen from his looks that he was up to no good. He told me that Valery was standing by the door of No. 3, and if any danger threatened would whistle twice. The danger could be the Administrator or his substitute, the corporal with tinted spectacles—the Cobra, the Germans called him—who on his master's orders went the round of the rooms every day to spy and listen.

Ványi knew how to pry up a floor-board. He worked with the others at the wine-stealing business. He pried up two boards and sawed them into half-metre lengths. They could be removed at any time, and replaced at short notice, one side supported on the joist and the other on a lath nailed to the

under-side of the next board. That work lasted two hours. During that time, luckily, no one disturbed us.

In the place of the pried-up boards there remained a rectangular opening through which a man could drop down into the cellar. With a great rush of excitement in me I shone a candle into the cellar for the first time. The dark hole seemed awkwardly deep, but we noticed in the middle a big heap of stones and rubble reaching up so high that when Ványi let himself down through the opening he could touch the heap with his toes. On the edge of the opening I could see now only his tightly gripping, whitened fingers, then suddenly they too let go. Ványi disappeared completely. I shone a candle after him and saw with relief that he had managed to stop himself on the heap of stones. I let down two candles and his tools to him, then put back the pieces of board, put my table on them and began quietly to work. Soon the muffled noise of a hammered crowbar and sliding bits of stone came up to me. Ványi had begun work.

I pretended the deepest absorption in my book, and even turned the pages, but I never remembered a line of what I was reading.

It had been agreed that I should stamp three times if an interruption arrived. We had especially to fear the corporal with the tinted spectacles who made a round every morning and had no other duty than to see what we were doing.

It was hours later when suddenly I heard Valery's whistle signal. I stamped. The hammering stopped. I waited in deathly silence, I and everything round me, the room and the whole fortress.

About ten minutes later in came the Cobra. He took off his cap, and a red ring remained on his high, narrow forehead under his scanty, oil-smeared hair. I could not follow the direction of his eyes behind the coloured spectacles. The two glassy discs stared at me blindly, with threatening uncertainty.

I greeted him with a nod, then began to read again. He

stood opposite me a moment, his spectacles ranging over the room. My little statuettes, the photographs, the box of books set on its side, the crockery on the window-sill, the queerly hanging, bulging canopy, everything at which he peered looked back at him in abject conspiracy, as though they too knew the great secret for which this thin man in the baggy trousers and brown tunic sniffed in vain. We were in a mood to break out laughing all as soon as he should be gone. But suddenly everything gasped and held its breath. The corporal's spectacles were aiming at a dirty grey cap and ragged, gaudy neck-cloth which evidently did not belong to me but had been thrown onto my straw mattress by someone else.

For minutes the corporal and Ványi's forgotten cap and neck-cloth looked at each other, they, poor things, wishing more than anything else simply to dissolve. The Cobra ran his masked glance once more over everything as though searching for the man to whom these things belonged, and at last, shaking his head, he went away with lingering steps.

After he had gone everything in the room remained still a long time in deathly silence. Valery's "All Clear" whistle only sounded when the corporal had definitely left the keep building. I quickly passed on the good news to Ványi with the agreed number of stamps.

The work in the cellar lasted for three weeks under constant similar excitement. Salz and Sedlar also shared the work, taking down with them crowbars and picks. With the stones they removed they built quite comfortable steps for going up and down. They found the entrance to the tunnel at the end of the first week. But only then began the most difficult part of the work and the watching. The way was blocked by rock-falls, the air was unbearable, and even though they contented themselves with opening nothing more than a narrow crack between the blocking falls, the carrying of the stones back along the ever-increasing distance meant much time and exhaustion. They had to be very

careful how they hammered when they arrived under No. 4 and the tower-room attached to it. Here it was really possible to work only at night, and even then it happened that some men were woken by the noise. Valery and Ványi, who lived in that room, had to use all their wits to calm the other men's suspicions. But at last we reached our goal. In the last days of February we found the exit under the north-west tower (which was opposite the church) a little above the moat.

That was a notable day altogether. Just at the time when the first, more difficult half of our plan of escape was complete someone proposed to me another, far more romantic way of escape. Dudás invited me to drink coffee with him, and then, with the greatest secrecy, informed me that his flying-machine, which the authorities believed to be nothing but a model, now only needed the last touches, so that in a couple of weeks there was going to be ready a real motorless aeroplane with which two people could easily escape to Spain.

I stared at my friend in amazement, thinking he had gone mad.

'Don't be frightened. I am not mad. And I will prove the whole thing to you,' he added, pulling out from under his mattress a big sheaf of sketches, plans and calculations with which he explained lengthily every detail of his enterprise.

I did not understand much about it, but I convinced myself that Dudás was indeed not mad. Everything seemed realisable enough. It only remained to be seen whether with his primitive tools he could himself make the last necessary parts. Dudás assured me everything was absolutely in order and promised to take me the next day to his workshop, where he and the Tirolese had been working for weeks. It was an interesting chance that Dudás had been allotted a workroom in the tower cellar under which we had found the outer end of the tunnel.

I said good-bye to Dudás wordlessly. Just at the moment

when he was showing me the greatest proof of his friendship I was preparing secretly to leave him for a long time, perhaps for ever, and I could say nothing.

We of Salz's party had fixed our departure for the next night at eleven o'clock. We gathered in my room. The members of No. 3 found nothing extraordinary in so many men coming to see me, for I often had visitors at night.

Buchholz seemed to be a little drunk. His eyes blinked curiously when I flashed the hurricane lantern in his face. But Salz reassured me, saying his friend had never been so sober in his life. We were all dressed for the occasion. Sedlar, Ványi and Valery were carrying the provisions in packs. They had seen nothing suspicious on their way to me, and had all succeeded in slipping into my room unnoticed.

'Come on, boys,' said Salz.

We lifted up the boards, and a puff of cold, musty air came up through the dark hole. For a moment we all stood round the black opening. My little tower-room suddenly became very inviting. I had not said good-bye to my friends. And in that chilling void there lurked unknown terrors. Where was that black opening leading us to? Suddenly it was all a dream, and anxiously I watched myself, what would happen to me, where would that will-less, thoughtless coma take me.

Even the mighty Sedlar stood white-faced before the opening. Then he crossed himself, and the others did the same.

We dropped down into the dark hole. Sedlar went first and Ványi brought up the rear. They knew the way best through the tunnel. The light flickered once through the still gaping hole into my little room, which then gave itself up to darkness and disappeared, dissolved in nothingness above us.

Grimy, scratched and stifling we came out of the fortress, but absolutely without noticing it. I had thought the passage

would never end as we crawled along, doubled up and bruising ourselves on rocks at every crawl. We slid awkwardly down into the moat, and only there came to ourselves under the effect of the cold night air and the rain with which the wind stung our faces.

We met no one on the road. The islanders did not leave their houses so late at night and in such a storm.

It took us scarcely an hour to reach the shore of the Herbaudière at the point where our lonely boat was to be. But our plans had not reckoned with the tide. When we reached the shore the waves were roaring in from the sea in deafening recapture of their old beaches. I could see nothing in the darkness. I momentarily lost all sight and hearing in the rain and the gale and the booming, crashing breakers, and a helpless stupor overcame me.

Salz and Buchholz spied out the boat and then shouted through the din to us to follow them. We clutched hold of each other and started into the towering flood. Sometimes the waves broke over us, and I felt myself being torn away from my companions and buried under those raging walls of water for ever. I was two desperately gripping hands with which I grasped Ványi, who was stumbling in front of me, as though my numbed fingers were grown into his shoulder.

When at last we reached the boat my feet were no more touching bottom. Buchholz, Salz and Sedlar first scrambled up, then pulled us up after them. The little fishing craft danced on the waves. The rain was still pouring down and the wind struck us sometimes in the face with such force that it took our breath away. The whole maddened world raged and roared round us, and we could see nothing. But we were at least on a safe refuge.

Salz wanted immediately to cut the rope with which the boat was moored.

'Are you mad?' roared Buchholz at him. 'Take a look round first.'

The two seamen crawled off along the bottom of the boat.

They had to feel for everything, for not even they could see any too well.

Suddenly there came a terrible shout.

Salz was shaking the mast with both hands, shouting in crazy fury:

‘God have mercy on the man who did it. There are no sails and no oars!’

At that moment a huge wave struck us. The water rushed past and away, and, as though the wave had washed away all our hopes, the reality burst on us: without sails or oars we were stranded here on a helpless, useless cockleshell that might at any moment be picked up by the storm and pounded to smithereens on the shore. That was the end of our escape. Was it chance or a malicious betrayal?

There was no time to think. ‘Back to the fort before it’s too late,’ ordered Salz.

And the stumbling, stifling struggle with the water, more raging than ever, began again. If Sedlar had not been with us, Ványi and I would never have come alive out of that tearing water. The giant man hugged us to himself like two children, put his head down and battered through the waves and clutching sea-weed and across the rocks to the shore.

Our lives at least were saved. Valery produced a bottle of rum from his sack. We drained the litre bottle in a moment. A welcome warmth ran through our shivering limbs. Sedlar took my dripping coat off me and rung it out in both hands like a rag. The rest followed his example, ridding themselves from the weight of the water. We rubbed each other’s hands and thumped each other on the back and towelled ourselves with our handkerchiefs as though we had merely come from some extraordinary nocturnal bathe.

Only Buchholz took no part in these efforts. He stood some few yards from us, silent and gloomy. No one asked him what was the matter. Only Salz looked once in his direction, and, as though reminded of it by the sign of that motionless figure, suddenly called out:

‘Come on, back to the fortress, quick! Perhaps they’ve got a surprise for us there too.’

Nothing happened on the way back. It was quite improbable that we should be able to return to the fort by the same complicated way as that by which we had come out. Yet we did so. We hastily filled up the entrance over the moat with stones and rubble, and after what we had been through to go down that secret passage was like walking down a street.

One surprise, however, there was in the fortress. The hole in the floor of my room was lit up. There was someone in my room. We stopped in helpless fright. Presumably the Administrator was waiting for us. Whisperingly we agreed that I should go up first. I could invent some reason or other. I could tell him I kept drink in the cellar, or went down there to read so as not to rouse the sentry’s attention by the lamplight in my room. Happily I had taken a book with me: the *Fioretti* of St Francis of Assisi, in French. I took off my cap, neck-cloth and overcoat, and taking the lantern in one hand and the book in the other went slowly up the steps we had made in the stone-heap.

Reaching the opening, I first put the lantern and book on the floor and then raised my head.

I was not prepared for the sight that met my eyes in my room. The eldest Stocker, room-president of No. 3, stood there in his shirt and his baggy pants, staring at me round-eyed, his face distorted with fright.

It turned out he had only just arrived in my room, had not even seen the opening and was only looking for me desperately on my mattress, for he had dreamt something very bad about me and because of that had come to my room.

I produced the story prepared for the Administrator about the reading, and the simple Tirolese believed it. He kept on asking my pardon for having disturbed me; he had at first not wanted to come, but not being able to sleep he had come as far as the door and had listened. As no sound came from my

room he could not refrain from coming in and lighting a candle. He tiptoed out of the room so as not to wake the men:

I beckoned the others up. Salz was very relieved. He looked searchingly at Buchholz, then remarked:

‘We shall see about this yet.’

The escapers stayed another hour in my room to warm themselves, ate a good part of the provisions meant for the voyage, and then one by one went off to their beds.

CHAPTER XV

LAST MONTHS IN NOIRMOUTIER

AFTER the escape failure I was in bed for two weeks with an inflammation of the throat. I had to keep the fact of my illness secret so as not to rouse suspicion, so there was no reporting to the doctor. It would in any case not have been very much use, for the old civilian doctor who looked in at the fortress once or twice a week never prescribed anything but a purge.

While I was in bed I heard of some very mysterious consequences of our attempt at escape. The very next day the Administrator, escorted by half the guard, had appeared in the tower cellar where Dudás was making his aeroplane, now our only hope of freedom. Dudás had to bring out all the parts of the machine onto the yard where the latrines were, and there they were solemnly burnt. Dudás in vain protested and displayed the Prefect's permission. His flying-machine was burnt, turned to ashes like the wings of Daedalus and Icarus.

At the same time the Administrator had the place at the bottom of the tower, where we had come out, cemented up. No one could imagine from where his knowledge of this exit came. If someone had betrayed the secret way, why had he not induced an examination in the cellar under my room, why did he not have the entrance to the underground passage walled up here, and why did he not start a search for those who had dug the passage and tried to escape?

One thing we were certain of—that the Administrator knew all about it. There might have been two explanations of the fact that he made no greater fuss about the matter.

The first was that the Administrator himself did not dare ask his superiors again for authority to deport men to a penal depot, for he had received a reproof from the Prefecture on account of the famous nocturnal scene when he had wanted to shoot at Rubin, and had been warned that that was to be his last scandal. Reporting the matter might even have meant his being sent to the front, where, since the launching of the German offensive against Verdun, the French soldier's life was exceedingly cheap.

The other supposition was that the Administrator had learnt everything from Coulinot, but without the names of the partakers, and that the chivalrous wine-merchant had made it a condition that the Administrator should content himself with making any further attempts at escape impossible, and undertake no further investigations. In this case it must have been Buchholz who was Coulinot's informant, and those two who had conceived the idea of stripping the chosen vessel. That idea could only have come from a seaman's brain. In any case Salz must have been of that opinion, for the next night, at the same time as our despairing discovery of the lack of sails and oars, he and some of his friends threw a blanket over Buchholz and thrashed him through it till he was more dead than alive. After that Buchholz was also confined to bed. The Administrator showed no signs of wanting to punish this beating affair.

My fever continued for a week. I scarcely knew what was going on round me, and I think I consumed nothing but coffee and tea. Sometimes I saw Soltész over me with a wet rag in his hand, which he probably put on my throat. Then Jacob held a big cup to my lips, and I had to swallow painfully. I spent the time in a dizzy succession of dreams. And one day I woke up to find myself in my little tower-room, with Jacob sitting on a gimcrack chair by the window filing away at a skittle-ball. The sunshine was pouring in at the window. Spring must be there.

After that I recovered quickly. It was a wonderful spring. From the big Gothic windows of No. 5 we could see far out to the salt-flats, where a silver mist shivered and gleamed. Further off little boats with coloured sails floated in the channels leading to the sea. Light, fluffy clouds appeared against the dark blue sky to wallow in the flood of light and then to dissolve without ever having gathered to a cloud-bank. The swishing of a windmill came from very far away. A bird would pass with thudding wing-beats, flying towards the sea. Even the old fortress seemed to preen itself. The sharp air flooded in through the open windows, patches of sunshine gilded the grimy blankets and shabby straw mattresses. The men were out in the yard basking in the sunshine, or singing as they went about their fatigues, amusing themselves at Jacob's newly opened skittle-alley. I went from one room to the other. Through the little windows at the back I could look out to the greening pastures and the bluish line of wood stretching across the background. From my old place I examined the ivy-covered house and the little garden with that peculiar exhilaration with which one sees a house where one's youth was spent. But I could not go out, and once nearly collapsed when I tried to take part in one of the walks.

At the end of March our guard was changed. The big-bearded old Breton and Vendée reservists were being sent to the front. They packed up gloomily. Madame Mignale had heard that they were not allowed to go back home to see their families. They were being sent straight to the defence of the line round Verdun.

In those weeks the atmosphere was made tense with great and bloody decisions. The German guns were relentlessly pounding at the wall of the French defence. We felt the War was at a critical point. On the other hand, the French newspapers wrote that with the unity of direction of the Allied military operations a new phase of the War was beginning which would bring the final victory if not speedily

so much the more surely. The *jusqu'au bout* had just been invented. Briand had come back from his journey to Italy in highest hopes. Poincaré visited the heroic troops defending Verdun. The personality of General Pétain came to the fore.

We were in the middle of spring-cleaning when our old guard fell in to go. We were all in the yard, scrubbing the mattress-frames and makeshift bits of furniture, ridding our blankets of bugs and brushing our clothes.

The old French soldiers watched us enviously. Our Hell was Paradise to them. Now they were to go into that terrible killing where daily thousands bled to death, where delirious crowds of men tried with cannon and machine-guns and poison-gas to break themselves a way through other men.

The Administrator strutted up and down in front of the sullen reservists, all paunch and conceit. Two or three paces behind him, faithfully imitating his every movement, strutted the lanky "Cobra," his eyes gleaming behind his tinted spectacles with pleasure that he did not have to go with the rest. The Administrator was Pétain at least in his own estimation, barking out his orders and generally doing his bit of saving the *gloire* of France.

The old guard was drawn up in front of the Administration buildings. There came a thumping on the gate. The "Cobra" in his baggy red trousers rushed with comical haste to the gate, shot back the iron bolts with his white, woman's hands and pushed open the double doors.

Through the entrance came the new guard. There may have been some thirty of them, all wounded and convalescent. One had his arm bound up, another limped. One pale young soldier's face had a nervous twitch. Several had bandaged heads. Among them in the front rank stood a corporal, his face swollen and greenish-yellow. His eyes travelled unsteadily over us, as, leaving our work, we came to stare at the new arrivals.

The two little troops looked at each other, the returning

and the departing. The old reservists stared in horror at these survivors of the killing: in those faces they glimpsed for the first time the reality of the War. Here there was no beautification and falsification and high-sounding slogans. And those were the lucky ones! For minutes long that meeting was dumb.

Then the Administrator went up to the new-comers' leader and in the space between the two groups went through the formality of handing over the list of the departing men.

Then the roll was called. The new leader took over the leaving men. He looked them up and down with some contempt. Cheap enough cannon-fodder in the defence of Verdun forts.

"*En route*"—he pointed towards the gate. The old guard moved slowly, as though they had to pull up each rooted foot. No one said a word of good-bye, and their last look could not see what was dearest to them in their lives. They saw only us, whom they had regarded with gloomy hatred. They had thought to escape danger if they fulfilled the Administrator's commands with slavish obedience. Poor devils, perhaps they would have liked to make some gesture towards us then. But it was too late now: the first man was jerked into movement, and with mechanical, wooden indecision the rest set off after him.

We expected the new guard to be worse than the old, but we soon saw we were wrong. The very first evening there they sat with the rest of us in Coulinot's wine-cellar, telling tales of all the funny and most horrible things in life at the front. There was someone among them from almost every sector of the French front. We heard for the first time the names of Haumont and Herbebois. They told us of Douaumont and Vaux, where the German attack achieved its first success at a terrible cost.

The Administrator tried to keep the new guard away from us. But they paid absolutely no attention to him. They were not the old tame sheep who could be frightened with

the threat of being sent to the front. At night the sentry on the wall climbed down to us and talked to us in the warm spring evenings when we could not stand the mattresses any longer. Only the stink that rose from those latrine-barrels he could not stand. He was indignant to hear that they had been put there at the Administrator's orders. 'The fat swine ought to be shoved in them and stifled,' he said with appropriate gesture.

The sentry had been a school teacher in Rennes in civil life. I had been there in peace-time, and we talked through the night about it. The sentry leant his elbows on the rifle across his knees, his white head-bandage shining in the dark, and stared in front of himself and hummed an old Breton song.

Next day the school teacher agreed with the others to leave the door leading to the main yard open at night. The Administrator of course immediately noticed it, and took to locking it personally every night. At that one of the guards took the lock off, and when the Administrator set up a great fuss about it they told him it would be as well if he were not such a nosey. The sentries on the tower court were not inclined to carry out their duties above those stinking barrels and the men using them. The Administrator in the end was forced to give in. The next day Coulinot remarked with a grin that his "honourable friend" had pulled in his horns, and would probably have to do so in many other respects, for there was no brow-beating the new guard.

The spring months passed quickly. Andor Németh and I were again all day in our garden, reading. I only once went out fetching water. There was green trembling on the trees again, the path twisted yellow across the sloping meadow where last year the American girl used to come to us out of the wood. Now the memory hurt, and the girl's face shrank back into an unreachable distance. We had

heard from Madame Mignale that this year she was not coming.

The shell-shocked corporal with the twisted face, weaponless, was our escort, and he lagged behind the whole time. At the pump we found a pretty girl from the village drawing water in a clay jug. The girl was almost townily dressed and was standing by the iron wheel of the pump, the sunset behind her lighting up her reddish-brown hair and picking out the shape of her body.

She purposely lingered with her water-drawing. The swollen-faced corporal came up grinning and encouraged us to help the girl. Zsiga Nagy, little Moritz Stein, the red-handed cold-water fanatic Weber and I were there. When Zsiga Nagy and Weber had understood the purport of the corporal's mumbled, indistinguishable words they picked up the bucket and made to jump up onto the pedestal on which the pump was set.

The girl lifted up her jug and called tauntingly:

'If anybody comes near he gets it poured over him.'

The sick corporal was highly delighted. With a horrible cackle of laughter he pointed to the girl and told the men not to leave it at that.

Cold water was Weber's element. Without the slightest hesitation he jumped up towards the girl without regard for the gush of water he received in his face. Zsiga Nagy quickly filled the bucket with water and poured the whole contents over the girl.

In a few moments a furious water-fight was raging. From the pump's black spout came a ceaseless gush of silvery water to fill the girl's jug or the men's bucket, and a tremendous shrieking and skirmishing and splashing took place. The corporal smacked his thighs in gasping laughter. The girl's hair, darkened to brown, clung wetly to her forehead, her breast heaved, her white teeth shone. But the two men were attacking now in a sort of blind forgetfulness, then rushed and caught the girl in their arms so that she could not pour water

on them, while, panting and with widening eyes they looked into her face. At last all three of them fell over onto the grass, and the girl, pouting and blubbering, wrenched herself free from their frantically embracing arms and in her sodden, clinging dress stood before us for a moment in the utter shamelessness of her body. Then she picked up her jug and ran off towards the village.

The corporal clapped his hands and shouted and roared with laughter. He could scarcely be quieted.

We shivered and went on with the filling of our barrel.

That scene plagued us for weeks. It had the frightening, vividly paining effect of a dazzling light suddenly flashed into a dark room. My eyes were accustomed to another light. I had seen Woman only through the blurring veils of dreams and recollective fantasy. Living woman had come to be no part of me.

At first I had gone through torments. In the idle hours of daytime and in sleepless nights the thought had come to me of past embraces till the memory had almost taken on bodily form, and I had fled from it into the rain and the cold night and had panted up and down till I nearly collapsed from fatigue.

Then the edge of desire had gradually blunted. The beastliness of everyday life thrust the tempting fantasies away, and my body grew so weak that all its strength came to be concentrated on its own maintenance. First the memories stopped, and then the nerves' unconscious reaction grew rarer.

I took to seeking the character of women in novels and plays and the rest of my reading with as much absorption as if it had been a question of some unknown being, perhaps not even human. Above all I sought in them what I did not find in men, and I became curious only of their peculiarities. I analysed them into a thousand tiny features and out of those features built up the imaginary monster I called woman. It was not woman, but an essence of femininity.

Real woman, as the chances of life formed her, was rather disturbing and frightening to me. And the mere sight of the girl of the water-fight more troubled and exhausted my imagination than the most frenzied embraces in the days when I was not yet shut away from women. Therefore I decided not to go any more water-carrying.

As it was, the consequences of that meeting with the girl and of the wild spring up-flooding drove me nearly crazy for weeks. A host of temptresses rose up round me. I did not myself know from where they came. They were not such as are conjured up by a writer's skill. There was no remembrance in them. They were much more living and aggressive. They lived round me, watched me, took part in my doings and with no initiative on my side suddenly gave sign of their presence.

If I were working alone in my tower-room, suddenly in the great stillness I would hear a woman's footsteps approaching—little, tapping steps like the sound of high-heeled shoes on the floor, and I heard too the swish of the narrow skirt. I looked up. It seemed to me the woman had stopped behind my door. I smelt clearly, madly, the perfume of her. Her nearness enwrapped me as when on a high hill a cloud enfolds one. I knew if I got up and opened the door the temptress would flit away. Yet I did not dare do it. What if she really was standing behind the door? And I would sit in my room till Jacob or someone came in.

That was the one who came just so far, who never came into my room. But she came to my door every day, sometimes twice or three times. Then there was one more impudent, who raised her smiling face quite, quite close to me, came near to me, looked at me with big wondering eyes so meaningly that I had to start up and flee from her down to the wine-cellar, there not to be at peace till I had drunk off a bottle of wine as though to quench a raging thirst. She was the one I most feared. I knew well the gleam of her hair, the wondering blue of her eyes where a man might lose himself,

the desire shining from her pale face and the mysterious smile of her lips.

Another, the laughing temptress, always sat at my bedside. I would only notice her presence when I woke up in the morning. Then she would leap up from beside me and with a trill of laughter slip out of the little window towards the fields and the wood, and her laughter still ringing from the distance for a long time.

There was one whose presence only a sigh betrayed, one whose hot breath touched me, one who in the darkness of the night stripped herself bare, and I woke at the sound as her last veil slipped whispering down her body and her nakedness shone out in the shadows.

Always, by day and by night, I had some new incarnations to fear. They must have inhabited the world of the sub-conscious, clinging to my nerves and senses like bats to the rafters, elemental impressions that only flutter into life when the light of consciousness dulls wearily.

That haunting did not last beyond the months of spring. When summer came the ghosts vanished as though the heat had absorbed them for writhing vapours of the imagination. I came to believe that they had never lived and surrounded me, and smiled when I thought of the frightened alarm with which I had greeted their appearance.

At the end of August 1916, after nearly two years of our confinement in Noirmoutier, the Administrator unexpectedly received orders to evacuate the camp, transfer us to Ile d'Yeu and for the future to expect the keep to be used as a penal prison-camp. It had taken the French authorities nearly two years to decide that the Black Monastery at best was fit for use only as a penal settlement.

Now, since under the new guard our treatment had improved and the Administrator's authority somewhat shrunk, we were almost sorry that with our private and public letters

of complaint we had perhaps helped the Prefect of the Vendée to his decision. It was not probable that there was anything better in store for us in the Citadel of Ile d'Yeu. The Germans who had been with us had written describing the conditions there. It was true our Administrator's factory for the production of spiritual and moral suffering was not working there, but there reigned strong military discipline, and the notorious *jeu de représailles* was relentlessly applied, since the majority of the prisoners were Germans. They had a biggish yard and a promenade round it, but for living-rooms there were underground casemates, and a leavening of ex-legionaries and convicts released during the War made life unbearable for the rest of the prisoners. Our Administrator had always sent anyone there with whom he could not deal. Alfred, the Parisian Apache of Austrian origin, and that jail-bird Schlitter were waiting for us there: that did not rouse our enthusiasm, though among the other Germans there were some good friends whom we should be glad to see again.

On the whole Ile d'Yeu did not seem to promise any improvement in our state. Of this we were all convinced, and set about our packing gloomily. The Administrator had allowed us twenty-four hours for it.

All the time we were occupied with our preparations the Administrator, his hands behind his back, stalked up and down among us, wrapped in an icy conceit. He would have liked to have us believe that this change was his work, but we knew from Coulinot that the order had caught him too very unexpectedly. It would be a great relief to see that cruel, hated, puffed-up figure no more. Now he still ordered and commanded. He stuck his nose into every phase of our packing as though he were afraid we might take the fortress's collapsing stones and the mould and the dirt or some of the rats with us.

For when we packed, that was all that was left in the building, except for the shelves and the few benches and the make-shift tables in the *réfectoire*. And in a few hours everything

had slipped back into its old, wild state. Everything disappeared from the rooms. What we could not take with us we burnt in the little tower court. We spent the whole night round the fire. Coulinot sent up a couple of litres of wine. Mandolins and guitars were playing.

At midnight Hampel scrambled up onto the heaped pile of rubbish. The fires burning round him gave a strange lighting to his figure. He stretched out both arms, and sang, not the Ave Maria. He sang the march of the Foreign Legion, the dark rhythms of the legion of misery.

We listened, white with emotion. The song brought the tramping of those tattered, outcast feet. A harsh rhythm, as if conjuring up here in the black shadows the millions and millions of spectre countenances of the oppressed, of the betrayed and of the crucified on the cross of slogans. Red sparks shot up from the crackling fire, past and round the dark figure of the singer standing as though cast in bronze, unafraid of the fire and the guards' bayonets, chanting the eternal threat of the oppressed:

. . . car il peut se révolter encore
la légion de la misère . . .

It was indeed a shrunken legion of the wretched, the four-score men who a few hours later at dawn assembled in the yard. To this we had shrunk in two years. The rest had been sent by ones and in groups to work, to other dépôts, some even home, and one had escaped from internment in death.

As one after another we came down into the yard and stood about in groups, we looked at each other with an almost stranger scrutiny, looking at what remained of us and what strength was left us.

Everyone had dressed in his best clothes; instead of a cap, a hat, instead of clogs, proper leather shoes. I looked at Jacob for quite some moments before I recognised him under his greening bowler hat and in his grey suit. Everything

hung loosely on him; his trousers sagged dreadfully, for the string he was using instead of his worn-out braces would in no wise keep them up on his sunken belly. He was the most despairing sight of us all. He had had to burn quite half his collection of jumble, but even so he had loaded his luggageless friends—Bistrán, Edward, Rosenberg and young Bombész—with an enormous quantity.

The Administrator sent for Edward and informed him that on the intervention of his two sons-in-law he was to be sent to a so-called *dépôt de faveur*. Edward's two daughters were Frenchmen's wives, but they had never written him a letter during the whole of his imprisonment. The King Lear of the Black Monastery now had no desire to accept his daughters' favours. He answered the Administrator curtly in his Parisian slang: 'My daughters can rot for all I care, if they've left me to rot all this time in Noirmoutier.' With that he turned about and left the Administrator flabbergasted.

Buchholz himself went before the potentate with the request to be left at Noirmoutier. Apparently he was like a cat; he clung to the place where he was. But he may have hoped for something from Coulinot. The Administrator did not grant his request. 'What are you thinking of? This is going to be a penal depot.'—'Well, what was it till now?' retorted Buchholz. But even for that he was not kept back.

The Administrator lost patience. He clapped his fat hands. 'Quickly! Quickly! Fall in in fours.'

As many members of the guard as were fit came out onto the yard with rifles and fixed bayonets. The Administrator flung a cloak over his arm and looked once more to see that his revolver was in readiness.

Then followed roll-call.

The four men at the front of the column, having no desire to make the acquaintance of the Ile d'Yeu system, had preferred to volunteer for mining work. They were told they would be sent to where they were to work from the Gen-

darmerie at Fromantine, where the boat for Ile d'Yeu was waiting for us.

Then came the Austrians. Ziffer, then Reichsfeld, fat and breathing heavily; Weber, then Jantschek with a big black beard; Leitner the butcher, in a new suit made by Zsiga Nagy; Edward with his half-spectacles, as shabby as ever; Ullrich, the room-president of No. 5; the three Stockers with the other Tirolese and the gypsy with the flashing teeth, now, as ever, carrying his fiddle under his arm; Buchholz, Schutzmann and tall, parchment-faced Schrummer; the big-bearded half-Czech barber Klitscher; the waiters from Kaiser to Tutschek of the frightful grin. Dr. Herz, beside Willersdorfer, was carrying a variety of little dainty parcels on his arm, as though he had just come back from shopping. Beside them were Hampel and Heger, and the line was ended by Wildner the barber, dainty, blond Remling, Kronbeck loaded with musical instruments, and lastly Horowitz the violinist.

Dudás was the first of the Hungarians, with Horváth, who had played to him all night, beside him. Then came the old men, from Müller to old Katz; then the men from No. 4; Zsiga Nagy and his whole court; and so on down to our rank, where were Soltész, Németh, Rubin and myself, and behind us Bárczy, terribly emaciated and looking as though he could not possibly stand the long walk to the end of the island.

We were counted over three or four times. Then the double gate was pushed open. On the other side of the draw-bridge stood a few women and children, and behind them loomed M. Palvadoz' fat figure and bluish-red face, in company with his Mephistopheles, Culoz. They had come to see their old clients depart. A deal had sunk into those two years. Outwardly we were beggars, though inwardly we took something strangely precious away with us. Not eighty men but one man set off through the gate.

The head of the column stopped suddenly. The Administrator was receiving instructions from the Governor of the

island. We in the rear fours stopped a last time in the entrance of Noirmoutier. We saw through the open gate the wide, silent, deserted yard, and behind the ancient poplar tree the Black Monastery. In the whole big yard stood only one bent-backed little old woman in black who wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron. Madame Mignale had watched our departure from the window of the canteen, and only now dared to come out. She must have been afraid of the Administrator. It may not have been for us she was crying. Perhaps she had thought of her husband. Or perhaps she was lamenting her lost livelihood, for in the penal depot there would be no canteen. But in spite of the apostles of hate she may have come to like us, and her tears may after all have been on our account.

"*En route*" came the order. The column moved off, and the keep, the deserted yard, the weeping woman disappeared, dissolved before our eyes like a dream picture.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CITADEL OF ILE D'YEU

FROM Fromantine, the *embarcadère*, where two years before we had boarded the boat for Noirmoutier, we reached the harbour of the island of Ile d'Yeu, Port Joinville, after about three hours' calm voyage.

Nothing happened on the way. There was no truth in the rumour that we should have to spend days at sea, perhaps to be caught and sunk by some German submarine. We were not even put on an American munition-ship as hostages.

At the station of Fromantine, besides official personages we met altogether two civilians, two representatives of the world of which we had known nothing for two years. On the jetty leading to the boat from Noirmoutier stood a fat merchant of Challans, in a white linen suit, with his over-powdered, bejewelled, scented, bulgingly fat spouse. They stared at us and we stared at them. The merchant of Challans looked at us out of eyes deep-sunk in fat-cushioned cheeks, and in the belief that we could not understand began explaining aloud to his wife some of the latest horror stories about the Boches.

The little fat woman, her face aflame with the heat, fanned herself with a handkerchief as though she wanted to drive the smell of us from her, and heaved and wheezed: '*Comme c'est terrible. . . . Comme c'est terrible. . . .*'

Finally the Administrator of Ile d'Yeu, who was taking over the list of us from our Administrator just beside the pair, said curtly to the Challans burgher:

'Don't talk nonsense.'

The Ile d'Yeu Administrator won our liking at first glance. He was a young, gentlemanly-looking officer, if perhaps a

trifle too fastidiously fashionable for the hard times of Verdun. Dudás, who had given himself a somewhat too liberal dose of rum as a preventive of sea-sickness, approached him on the boat and addressed him in broken French, saying in effect how much he preferred him to our Noirmoutier man. Then he relaxed a little and talked to us.

He gave us immediately to understand that he had been at the front, and had been invalided out of active service on account of a shot in the lung. He was of the opinion that an Allied victory was only a question of time. Then he produced a silver cigarette-case, tapped a Maryland on the cover, lit up, blew big smoke-rings and looked out over the sea. If we were of another opinion, he was clearly not curious to know it. We did not try to enter into a discussion. It made no difference to us, anyhow.

We stood pale and huddled on the deck. The little steamer butted through the swelling, iron-grey waves: round us were armed guards, behind us the hostile-looking captain, probably cursing at having to transport Boches in his boat. And with complete resignation, without the faintest thought of resistance, we let ourselves be carried further and further away. What was now happening to us had been our fate for the last two years. Only now that ancient, hostile prison-ship swaying on the wide water expressed it all clearly, almost symbolically. We were one single, swimming, aching slave-song. A mourning-veil swept away on the waves of the sea. So identified with our destiny that one could have obliterated with one stroke the individual forms of life and there would have remained a mere fate, the blind war-life, just as it needed but one wave to break over us and in the next moment we would have sunk, ship and all, and over us the wide, dark flood would have danced indifferently, as though nothing had happened. In all our eyes there was the same numb aimlessness, like the staring white dial of a stopped clock.

The elegant Administrator had been talking for some time to the captain. Suddenly he raised his field-glasses from

where they hung round his neck and looked south-west. He pointed something out to the captain, but the latter took no notice beyond nodding his head.

Ile d'Yeu.

A white column, like a strip of light, appeared against the grey of distance. The little island's lighthouse. Then a black streak gathered before it, the tower itself broadened but sank into the background. Then above the streak settled a zigzag line of shadow, as though cut out of fog. It was as if an enormous hand were improvising the whole spectacle. Roofs and windows glittered, black masts pierced the mist. The picture slid nearer and nearer, then suddenly the mirage dissolved, the ship turned, sounded its siren with a gush of steam and slid from the open sea between two stone breakwaters, making the moored fishing-boats dance in the stagnant green water of the harbour.

After the great calm of the sea suddenly the noise and bustle of life enveloped us. Fishing-boats were tying up and shouting across to the shore. Pinafores children ran screaming shrilly down to the jetty. Blue-aproned men and women in black poured out of the doors of the shops on the harbour front. The boat hooted, and, as if in answer, more and more people hurried out from the side-streets.

When we disembarked the whole population of the harbour was waiting for us in a mass. In front stood the children, clinging to their mothers, then the women, and at the back the peak-capped, whiskery old men. They crowded together and stared in dead silence as we filed off past them. Our faces can have no longer given occasion for outbreaks of abuse as are proper to hostile feeling. And perhaps they had grown used to the Boches, for there had been Germans interned in the Citadel since the beginning of the War.

We climbed up to the right of the Citadel among barren hillside fields and scattered little houses. The fortress did not beckon to us from far, as did the keep of Noirmoutier. Suddenly the drawbridge over the moat was before us, beyond

it the fort's grey walls rising from the deep ditch, and the iron gate with above it a single tower-like building on the roof of which the French tricolour waved. We halted for a few moments in front of the entrance, where on the wall above the iron gate was written in big letters: *Forteresse de l'Île d'Yeu. Construite de 1872 à 1875.* The path leading to the right and left from the road went up to the wood which closely surrounded the whole fort. This had been designed forty years ago, against the English.

The iron gate opened with an echoing bang, chains rattled, iron gate-props clanged and we marched through the long arch of the gatehouse into our new prison.

In the light of the afternoon sun a big wide yard spread before us. Blankets were airing and washing drying on clothes-lines. Some shirt-sleeved internees were crossing the broad space.

On our left was standing a little group of the Germans from Noirmoutier who had come here half a year ago, Däumling head and shoulders above them all. He waved his big hand to us, his spectacles gleaming, his lips curved to a smile. Beside him was a bald-headed man with a thick black beard, scarcely recognisable as Däumling's colleague from Leipzig, Nagel. The schoolboys were with them, now all grown men. Von Bergen, the German sculptor, was standing there in his dirty overall. Then the handsome Tienemann in a brown linen suit, and his friend Georges, who had grown a big moustache. Max and Markus together as usual, waving energetically and shouting out our names as they recognised us.

From casemates deep-sunk in the ground under the grass-grown rampart on two sides of the yard the other internees streamed out at the noise. All at once the yard filled with strange ghost-like figures shouting in all directions, 'The Austro-Hungarians have come,' and in a few moments the deathly, crouching silence even here was sent flying by the thumping of clogs and loud and wondering shouts.

We were lined up in the middle of the yard. A tall sergeant with a paper in his hand came up with several soldiers. They numbered us off by twos. There were eighty-three of us altogether. The sergeant looked round the yard, his eyes taking stock once again of the underground shelters into which he had to stuff us.

The yard was a square pit dug in the ground. A mound about five or six metres high ran round its edge. Under this were the casemates that served for living-rooms for the prisoners, the underground passages and the whole establishment the entrances to which gaped at us now all round like the dark throats of burrows. In horror we realised that we were now to live and sleep in those catacombs. There were small rooms only at each side of the entrance, and these were taken up by the offices of the authorities and by the guard-house. The tall, thin sergeant divided our party into two groups. Forty-one had to be billeted in the casemates on one side, and forty-two on the other side. The party to which I belonged were allotted Numbers 51, 53 and 55 of the big casemates opening on the yard, and Numbers 35 and 36, which were smaller ones opening on the underground corridor. At the door of each room stood the room-president and counted off the places in it. Into each room there were put just as many men as there had been places vacant. We began with No. 55, into which ten fitted. Twelve men disappeared into the cellar-door of No. 53, and thirteen into No. 51, among them myself. The rest were led along a long dark passage to find room in Nos. 35 and 36.

The door and the two windows on each side of No. 51 opened on the yard. No light reached to the middle of the casemate. The farther wall backed on to the fort's deep moat and received the tainted air of the latter through one high semicircular opening and two smaller loophole-like openings. Thirty men fitted into the casemate, each man receiving a space eighty centimetres wide and one metre eighty centimetres long.

Besides myself, Dudás, Soltész, Németh, Schneider, Kilar, Moritz Stein, Dr. Herz, the three Stocker brothers, Buchholz and Schutzmann all came to No. 51.

I stopped before the place allotted to me. A black, uneven floor, a dirty wall with an iron hook sticking out of it four feet from the ground. Clearly the place had originally been built for the horses of the artillery, and on these hooks were hung the poles used to separate the horses. Above the hook was a thick plank serving as a shelf. Above that the wall bent to the roof's arch.

There was no reducing this place to habitableness. All we had for the purpose was the bit of grey sacking that had been thrust into our hands in the yard. This we were to fill with straw, and with that our lodging would be complete.

I threw down my hand-bag and the bit of sacking, sat down on them and stared in front of me.

Here was nothing to be done.

Here was all the cruel forlornness of the first days of imprisonment all over again. Only now my nerves did not stand it. The darkness of that casemate shut down on me like the lid of a coffin. Ragged figures passed and repassed me. Their clogs clattered on the stone.

Everywhere stone, iron, chains, rough shouting, darkness and nauseating stench. For here it was as though the majority of the prisoners had conspired with our gaolers in the aggravation of our common sufferings. They were discipline-less, coarse, ceaseless in their foul-mouthed brawling and quarrelling, and even in their friendly advances and joking there was something weary and downcast. I would never have believed such a world could exist. We had been sunk somewhere under the earth, between echoing cliff walls, where suffering and coarseness and bestiality were being beaten out on a terrible anvil, like the weapons of Vulcan.

I do not know how long I sat there in desperate, fearful thought. Suddenly I roused to find the din had stopped

round me. As though everybody had gone out of the room. I raised my head. Beside me sat Moritz Stein, beyond him Andor Németh, Soltész, Dr. Herz, opposite us Schneider, Kilar, Buchholz, Schutzmann, the three Stockers, and by the window Dudás. They were all sitting there, staring in front of themselves as I had done. Their faces gleamed palely out of the room's darkness. No one said anything, each perhaps not knowing that the others were there. But from their forlorn, pale faces a strange, touching consolation swept towards me like a comforting whisper. I drew a long breath, and the blood flew again in my veins. Some one of us broke out sobbing.

At dusk Von Bergen came to fetch us.

By then we had filled our straw mattresses and stowed away our luggage. Next to me there was half an empty place, so I at least had room enough. The room-president, Bürger, whom I knew from the "Meine-deine" in Noirmoutier, explained that my place was so exposed to the draughts that no one would occupy it. That was why I had forty centimetres extra room. The other men's mattresses fitted so closely that to reach them they had to climb over the trunks and bags piled at their foot. The shelf accommodated only the most necessary things, crockery and toilet things.

There was, however, the consolation that Däumling and his crew were in the same room, and they used to pile their mattresses during the day according to their system in Noirmoutier, and with a curtain had succeeded in screening off for themselves a comparatively quiet place.

There was moreover a novelty here in that in the middle of the room was a table with a bench on two sides of it and an oil-lamp above it. According to Bürger, if we contributed to money for the paraffin we could work or play at the table all through the dark winter days.

Bürger and Von Bergen were eager to console us. The

German sculptor had brought his best friend with him, a German writer called Schuler.

Schuler seemed a good-humoured young fellow enough. He was wearing a workman's suit of velveteen, but it had apparently been made in the Citadel, for it had a sporting cut about it which distinguished it from the ordinary thing of that sort. He was fat in spite of his youth, and he planted his legs, on which the stuff of his clothes had eternalised their restlessness in permanent creases and folds, like a man accustomed to bearing a paunch. His face, too, was fat, a little flabby and colourless, and from under his long, light-brown, back-skimmed hair lively, clear-blue eyes looked out.

Schuler had heard about all of us already from Von Bergen's talk, and, remarking that no one stayed in those noisome dormitory-crypts when it was not absolutely necessary, hustled us out in front of him. Some of the others had already been taken away by their German friends.

I was just at the door when I noticed that everyone had gone out of No. 51, and that Dr. Herz was still sitting in his place, with his head in his hands, motionless. His pretty parcels all done up in coloured paper were scattered round him, spread out on the dirty floor like fallen flower-petals. He had not touched anything. He perhaps was the forlornest of us all. I asked Von Bergen to tell him to come with us. The German sculptor made a face, but then clumped noisily and unwillingly up to Dr. Herz.

For a moment we waited in the door, and Schuler, hearing what was the matter, peered back into the darkness of the casemate. Then Dr. Herz appeared, and beside him Von Bergen, going unwillingly.

'*Ekelhafter Mensch*,' whispered Schuler, as he caught sight of Dr. Herz.

The unfortunate Austrian schoolmaster's breakdown had indeed not been to his advantage. His eyes were red as a hare's from weeping. The remaining reddish hairs on his bald head stuck up. He looked much older than he really

was, and yet, broken as he was, in the movement of his thick legs rubbing against each other, in the smile flickering round his thin lips, there was something of an unconscious, repugnant desire to please, a soft resignation to pain and a tearful, coquettish gratitude to us for our pity of him.

'I am so sorry, I have even forgotten to put on my spectacles,' he said with downcast eyes, as he shook hands with Schuler; and there was in his voice the shamed bashfulness of a hostess receiving her guests in a dressing-gown.

We went out. The internees were walking up and down in the yard, across the length of the Administrative offices between the two rows of casemates.

Now we saw several decent-looking figures among them. There was one tall, handsome man dressed with remarkable elegance who immediately drew our attention. He had come out of the passage next to the kitchen, and he was wearing white trousers and a blue silk pyjama-coat. His blond, curly hair was carefully parted, his face cleanly shaven. He looked just as if he were walking across the court of some chateau. The only strange thing was that he carried a battered tin basin filled to the brim with lettuce. He made for the iron barrel beside our door, picking a way for his dainty footgear through the mud round it. As we were passing him he let the water pour over his lettuce and looked up at us with a friendly smile.

'Look out,' whispered Von Bergen walking beside me, as he saw I noticed the salad-washer. 'That's Count B——, another Herz!' he added with a sarcastic grin, and pointed at Dr. Herz, who was walking a few yards ahead with Schuler and Németh.

The first life-story that I heard in the Citadel was that of that very elegant aristocrat. Von Bergen told me that before the War Count B—— had lived in Paris. He had been concerned in certain very exotic swindles. Let us say he bound himself to deliver a few truck-loads of blue fox furs. Or let us say he had something to do with the famous Chinese pigtail swindle, notorious for the fact that the contractors could only

produce one load of original pigtails, then, the wearing of pigtails in China being forbidden, a fraudulent substitute was delivered for the rest. 'He'd have done a spell without the War,' said Von Bergen, with a gesture. For the rest, the Count lived in imprisonment with a certain sailor of some forty-five years of age. Von Bergen pointed him out too among the walkers. He was a tall, thin man with a coarse expression and an extremely long, pointed moustache.

At this point I inquired, despite the possible tactlessness of the question, what had happened to Von Bergen's Russian mistress. The German sculptor's face clouded. She had been turned out of the island. When he had first arrived they had met twice more, but it could not be done without attracting attention. The well from which the water was brought was only a few paces from the fort. The "beggar woman" had immediately attracted notice, was arrested and was only saved from the suspicion of spying by the intervention of an official of the Russian Embassy. The same official had obtained permission for her to stay in Nantes. From there she sent him at least one letter a day and twice a week a parcel.

First we examined the six casemates opening on the yard. They were all exactly alike. Their two windows and their door opened on the yard, then came a long, vaulted cellar the back wall of which was also part of the moat running round the fort. As far as I could see the casemate opposite ours was inhabited by men of a better sort. In No. 52 there was a ruler and compass lying on the table by one of the windows. There were leather suit-cases piled up at the foot of the framed mattresses. Tienemann and Georges had arranged themselves a compartment here, too. But in general the arrangement of such things had peculiar objects in Ile d'Yeu. The Germans only took to "disinterested" ornamentation of their places when they saw what efforts we made to force some homeliness out of the fort's dirt and unloveliness. But for the present the Austrians and Hungarians had the worst

of it. They were reduced to the stone floor between the Germans' mattress-stands, and naturally everywhere had received the worst places.

In No. 52 we found the Austrian *élite*: Ziffer; fat Reichsfeld, who was staring in horror at the filthy stone floor and was perfectly incapable of imagining he would have to sleep there; Weber and his fellow cold-water fanatic, Neuhaus; then Willersdorfer of the erotic pictures, Leitner the sausage-maker and lastly Horowitz the musician. Of the Hungarians, Szöke the shoemaker, Bajusz and the friendly, modest little valet Váczy, all lived here. In No. 54 lived Kaiser's waiter guard to the number of eight, also among decent-looking Germans. Only eight had fitted into No. 56: bad-tempered Klitscher, a barber; tall Schrummer, Tutshek, Fritz of the guitar, Salz with two seaman friends and the delicate Remling.

In No. 53 on our side we discovered Bárczy, the Budapest banker's son, Rubin and Reisner forlornly alone among noisy, quarrelling German workmen. They told us there were others who had joined that hellishly dinning company. In No. 55 the Tirolese were quartered. Here had come poor Poss too, who again was neighbour to the dancing Tirolese gypsy, and besides him Riedl and a couple more, among much such a crew as in No. 53.

It was a far more complicated business to find the rest of our men. They lived in the smaller casemates opening on the underground passages.

Von Bergen was not inclined for further discovery. He was modelling something in clay and had to wet it for the night as long as there was light left. He took leave of us and Schuler took over our guidance.

Schuler took his short pipe out of his mouth for a moment, and, standing before the underground passage on the left of our casemate, indicated the whole fort with a sweep of his hand.

'You must imagine this place like a huge squid,' he explained. 'The beast's back is the yard. And its arms reach

out all round into these black openings and there strangle the wretched victims.'

Two of the black mouths on each side of the opposite recess in the yard were the entrances to two long passages out of which one or two unusable cellar dens opened, and both led up to a bastion. Of the two bastions one was used by the soldiers and on the other there stood a wooden hut which Däumling and his party had inherited from a German painter who had had connections enough to get himself sent to a family camp.

The other two underground passages were on the side where we stood. From these passages one gained access to several rooms. First we visited the underground quarter dug in on the side of the uneven-numbered casemates. At the beginning of the passage, to the right, was the door into the kitchen. Here the evening soup was boiling in an immense cauldron. A sooty-faced young German in shirt-sleeves and a leather apron received us, thinking we wanted to buy coffee. For the kitchen sold for one sou a thin brown liquid the advantage of which was that they gave you plenty of it and sweetened it a little with saccharine. We tasted the *Ile d'Yeu* "nigger-sweat" and looked round in horror at the deep, sooty cellar with its hovering smell of bad fat.

In one corner three of the internees were peeling turnips. An old and dirty fox-terrier came out of the depths of the kitchen, wagging his tail at us. He was the terror of the kitchen rats, and used to bring at least three to the kitchen chief every day, receiving a piece of bread in reward.

Opposite the kitchen a little, wooden-floored room opened out of the passage. This was one of the living-rooms of the favoured. Here lived Count B——, too, who was just consuming his salad with his sailor companion as we came in. The Count introduced himself and inquired whether any of us could play any instrument. He was very fond of singing. He was delighted when he heard we had a perfect little orchestra.

It was naturally no use searching for Noirmoutier men in the abodes of the privileged. For that we had to go deep into the gloom of the passage. About thirty paces away it was crossed by one leading left and right: the left branch led to the two adjoining cellars which served as dining-room. These rooms had only the upper half-moon windows opening on the moat. The damp, gleaming raw stone vault echoed our footsteps with manifold strength. The long tables and benches stood empty. Only in one corner of the second cellar two men had retreated, who started apart as we came in. 'Sorry!' called Schuler to them.

We felt faint and went out of the stuffy, damp-aired room. We were to eat there. Schuler reassured us, saying that in a couple of weeks we should be seeing and feeling as well here as the owls in the moat. '*Der Mensch ist ein ganz gemeines Tier.*' Next to the dining-room the little casemate No. 36 opened out of the passage. Here the gypsy Horváth was quartered. Only the dark outlines of objects in the room were visible. The only light filtered in through the high, half-moon opening above the moat. Horváth was alone in the room, softly plucking out a Hungarian air on his violin. He did not complain. He could build himself a path of sound on which his spirit could escape. Moreover, his place happened to be between two compartments, so that he had only to hitch his tattered blanket onto the stretched wire and he too had a compartment of his own. Besides this No. 36 had a wooden floor, which made up for the lack of air. Yet Schuler, who should have known, remarked with a grin, 'Brother Gypsy won't stand it here for long.' To our inquiries he only vouchsafed the remark, 'It's a hot hole, here.'—'Why? Because it is near the kitchen?'—'*Jawohl!*' he replied with a roar of laughter, and sucked furiously at his pipe.

No. 37 opened out of the left-hand branch passage. It was considerably bigger, and its upper window had some air from the yard. Here Jacob, Bistrán and old Müller had

been quartered. Müller was alone in the room, arranging things. What with Jacob's enormous quantity of rubbish he could scarcely find room at all for his own little bundles. I introduced the old slipper-maker to Schuler as the "director of the course of higher education in Noirmoutier," and the title gave the old man his first moment of pleasure in Ile d'Yeu.

Beyond the cross-passage the main one led up by a few steps to one of the bastion courts.

As we came down from that court, which was used for washing clothes and other work, the first supper-division, their plates in their hands, were trooping along the passage.

We went past the line of Administrative offices and soldiers' lodgings to the side of the even-numbered casemates. Here there were not so many rooms opening off the passage as there were on the other side. Otherwise the scheme of things was the same, with the canteen instead of the dining-room. At the beginning of the passage, on the left, was the sick-room, on the right a little privileged room where the German naval officers lived. Further on it was so dark that we needed a lighted candle to find the cross-passage leading to the little casemates Nos. 42, 44 and 46, where Zsiga Nagy and all his train were lodged, plus Valery and Ványi and their friends. Here, too, six of the Austrian seamen were quartered. This passage also led finally to a little bastion yard or court, which was at the prisoners' disposition.

It was already getting dark when we finished our tour. We came sick and faint out of the passage onto the yard. We almost regretted having made such a survey of our whole misery on the first day. It was harder when we knew the whole weight of the horror.

The yard was at least spacious and airy. It must have been about twice as big as that of Noirmoutier. It took about one hundred and sixty or one hundred and seventy paces to walk the distance between the two rows of casemates (I many times measured the path), while the distance between the

Administrative buildings and the high wall opposite was even greater. On this side the yard receded, because a double ramp led up to the so-called rampart, the Ile d'Yeu prisoners' multiple-purpose rampart promenade.

Schuler led us up.

The rampart ran round the top of the casemates, high above the Citadel. The whole thing was really only a promenade five or six paces wide, both grass-grown sides sloping down steeply inwards to the upper edge of the casemates, outwards to the moat surrounding the fort or to the square bastions jutting out into the moat. This road was embanked so high that it was almost like flying to walk there. After the dark, stuffy cellars, where one was always bumping into iron or stone, it was freedom.

Walking on the rampart promenade was allowed till eight o'clock in the evening. Only a small part, leading to the top of the offices, where the French flag was hoisted, was forbidden us. At that point you could see right out to the sea, which now in the greying dusk cut the edge of the horizon of sight like a huge, longitudinal blue shield which lit into glowing, trembling waves as the beam from the Ile d'Yeu lighthouse swept over it.

The evening stillness grew on the rampart. From the depths of the moat owls rose up with soft, rag-like wing-beats and began their round of flight, hooting in uncanny rhythm. Beyond the moat rose red pines, their bare trunks in the moon's greenish light like monstrous rounded thighs under their skirts of laced foliage. There was a strange taste in the soft, sweetish air, as though before going to sleep the trees had wantoned, the sea had drunk of the moon's loving and the earth had grown tired under the sky's embrace.

In that strange, panderous mood of things shadows of rare walkers shrank against each other at the corners of the darkened promenade. Sometimes a solitary shadow passed us quickly, turning a wide, burning gaze on us. Dr. Herz was ahead with Németh and Dudás. The Austrian school-

master was talking animatedly now, and if some passing, desire-goaded human shadow looked after him searchingly he laughed out in a thin, eerie voice. Schuler grunted. 'Your friend has perceived he is walking on the Citadel's Corso del Amore. . . .'

We came down from the rampart into the yard.

The underground rooms, like stifling lungs, were greedily sucking in the cool evening air through their doors and windows. The men were standing about in groups in front of the doors. In one or two of the groups readers of newspapers were explaining the War to the simple workmen who formed the majority in Ile d'Yeu. The Noirmoutier men were apart and almost hostilely inclined towards the original inhabitants who could bear this underground life with such naturalness. They were all of the same mind. 'We must change something here if we have to die for it.' On the ground in front of one of the passages, legs outspread and motionless as a flung-down sack, sat fat Reichsfeld. They said he had a horror of the air in the casemates because he choked there. Behind him, from under the echoing vault of the passage, rolled a powerful baritone voice—"O, *quella gioia che mi fa morir . . .*" In one of the cells, which served when empty as music-room, the Count was trying out his voice.

A black group of soldiers was standing in front of the arch of the main entrance. We had to pass through them to reach the canteen. Their weapons were leant against the wall of the arch, and in front of them more soldiers were sitting on their packs. The passage to the canteen turned off to the left just before the iron gate. The entrance was uninviting enough, but the room itself fulfilled no promise of a prison *douceur*.

It was as though all the din and all the beastliness in the Citadel were crammed into that smoke-filled cellar, all the

internees, crowded together on benches, shouting to make themselves understood. And into that deafening din banged and clanged every minute the bars and chains of the iron gate, opening and shutting for coming or going soldiers.

The most constant frequenters of the canteen were the seamen, the drink-loving workmen, the ex-convicts and ex-legionaries. After the thin evening soup it was enough for them to drink half a litre of the cheap red wine to be completely drunk. Then they would begin bawling and cursing and fighting. The guard would push in among the husky brawlers, fish out the ringleaders and take them off to the cells, and then the whole performance would begin all over again.

Four oilcloth-covered tables, each with two benches, were set end-on to the wall: they were lit by an oil lamp hanging from the vault. Among the noisy talkers I recognised Alfred, the ex-Austrian workman-Apache, and the cheerful ruffian Schlitter, who that time in Noirmoutier had burnt his clothes in the cell and warmed his hands over the blaze. Now he was sitting with Schutzmann and Buchholz and explaining something to the latter, who was sitting just opposite him, putting both hands on his interlocutor's shoulders, sticking forward his head and staring with his protruding red eyes into his face.

For the rest, they were all figures of this sort who sat here. Dirty, torn shirts with the sleeves rolled up, tattooed arms, caps and baggy corduroy trousers. Perhaps the only difference among them was that the Austrians had a dash of colour about them and were more theatrical. The Germans were more lethargic. They talked less, smoked ceaselessly, from time to time spat over the wine-glass or grunted a word or two, and one would have thought they were the most apathetic beings in the world when suddenly at the slightest word their faces turned purple, they leaped up and crashed their fists into the faces of their neighbours with whom they had apparently been having a quiet drink.

We found room at the last table. Here some rather better-looking men were sitting. This was the table of Madame Boutineau's "eating clients": Madame Boutineau was the proprietress of the canteen. A bald, sooty-faced man in a blue apron banged a plate full of a sort of ragout down in front of us, and immediately ran off again, for he had to serve everybody. We were surprised that Madame Boutineau should have chosen this elderly, melancholy German Jew to help her when there were first-class waiters to be had among the prisoners.

Schuler explained the secret of Michel's enviable career. He had volunteered of his own accord to the Boutineaus to wash up the crockery. He had performed this work to perfection, and when business was over in the canteen the Boutineaus, according to the patriarchal custom of the French *petit bourgeois*, invited him to eat at their table.

Michel protested vociferously against this honour. How could he, a poor German prisoner, eat soup from one dish with Monsieur Boutineau who was a retired sergeant-major and "Commandant" of the Citadel? But in the end he sat down. Politely he ate the bread-and-soup and even took some of the vegetables. But when they offered him meat he simply stood up from the table and declared they could spit in his face if he ever should be seen eating meat except on Sundays. What would things come to if Michel, the most wretched of all the wretched prisoners, ate meat every day?

Boutineau and his thrifty wife were completely overcome with admiration. They had never seen such a man! This Michel was a treasure! And a few days later Michel was promoted to waiter. Soon after that it was discovered that he was really a butcher, so he was set to preparing ham and sausages. There was of course no question of shutting the till before so worthy a fellow. Michel was soon given the right to collect the yellow, red and grey counters from the prisoners. He even did the accounts every evening, for the Boutineaus knew nothing about accounting.

By his exemplary behaviour Michel obtained that in a couple of weeks he could do what he wanted. His employers trusted him blindly, and the cunning German Jew knew how to exploit this trust. It is true he did not eat meat when he could be seen; but in the darkness of his mattress place in the casemate he consumed a wealth of tasty morsels. He sold everything at half price to his friends and yet collected the yellow, red and grey counters to such purpose that last Christmas he had already two sets of clothes when Boutineau made him a surprise present of a pair of trousers and a blue apron, so that he should have something to put on. Poor orphaned Michel, how pleased he was with that generous gift! 'How do you, orphan Michel, deserve to put such trousers on?' he said with tears in his eyes as he accepted the present.

Michel's employers stationed themselves opposite the tables, standing behind a zinc-covered little desk, till, between six and eight in the evening, business stopped in the canteen.

Boutineau was thin, taciturn and sullen. Under his hooked nose a long drooping moustache emphasised still more his bad temper. He had served in the Legion and from there had returned, ruined in health, to the comfortable position of Commandant of the Citadel. In peace-time he had absolutely nothing to do, but the War had suddenly opened great vistas of profit to him. When the fort was turned into a prison-camp for two hundred and fifty or three hundred men he had received the canteen rights. But he was no business man. The money slipped out of his hands, and he could not attract the better sort of prisoners. He only began to profit when Michel took a hand in the administration of his affairs. The income which his "puritan" servant allowed him was at any rate double what he would ever have earned on his own account.

Boutineau was in charge of the drinks. A possible reason for his constant bad humour was that he had been forbidden drink by the doctor, and he himself had to dispense the

desired stuff to other people. He hated the Germans in any case, but the particular circumstance that the wine went down their throats made them all the more detestable in his eyes.

If Boutineau was indolence and inactivity personified, his little, tubby wife bustled and scolded all the more. She was always trundling out from behind her desk to stand arms-akimbo in front of the tables to see that her clients did not go off with her plates, glasses or forks. She was a sallow-faced woman with greying, tousled hair. It seemed quite an irrelevant fact that she was born a woman. With her dumpling body all fattened to shapelessness and her thick warrior's legs she was no sight to rouse masculine desire.

At eight o'clock in the evening a soldier came in to announce closing-time. The noisy guests heaved themselves up. They had first to file past Madame Boutineau, who looked them over searchingly to make sure they were not taking anything away with them. Then came a more difficult trial. The way out into the yard led between two files of soldiers drawn up under the entrance arch. The soldiers watched the passing men sharply for signs of drunkenness, ready to pounce if they saw someone. If anyone staggered or gave a shout they were on him with a rush, and he was lugged off to the cells.

That evening everybody passed safely. Then in the yard they all scattered. Their voices died away and in a few minutes the big yard was silent.

The moonlight shone greenish-white on the "squid's" back. The arched openings through which its arms reached deep in to the shrinking prisoners disappeared in the dark side of the high, straight embankment. The outline of the surrounding rampart-promenade showed more sharply. On it the patrolling sentries grew to monstrous figures that threw black shadows not only, as it seemed, on the moonlit yard, but on the whole sleeping world.

The oil-lamp on the table of No. 51 was flickering its last when we came in. Our room-mates were already lying down.

Scarcely more than one or two of them had stands for their mattresses. Most of them were on the ground, so close to one another that if they stretched out an arm they struck a neighbour.

We took off our clogs and tiptoed to our places. I looked at my place in horror. How was I going to sleep the night in that foul place? It was still only half-past eight. In Noirmoutier we used to be reading at that time. Or we had asked nothing better than to be able to sit out in the tower court. A great longing seized me for Noirmoutier. That keep and its courts and we its inhabitants were now a living unit that was savagely being hewn asunder. I might have longed for so much more or mourned so many other things, but in that moment it was this greatest cruelty of all that hurt.

The lamp on the table had long gone out. I lay down fully dressed on the straw mattress and stared into the enveloping darkness. I do not know how long I had so lain when suddenly from the yard, through the open door, a terrible cry sounded. In the first moment I thought I myself had cried out.

The scream was repeated. As if someone were being strangled.

I sat up on my bed and listened, my heart thumping. The voice seemed known to me. Then an even more terrible cry came. Then the thump of running feet and the shouts of other voices.

But I heard that on my way. I had leapt up and run out into the yard and I saw that round me others were running too.

We saw a great commotion in the yard in front of the entrance archway. I ran in that direction, and as I ran I saw more and more figures come out from the other casemates, and even from the underground passages, to run towards the agitated crowd swarming in front of the gate.

When we reached it, all we could make out was that our Noirmoutier men were struggling with the soldiers. I heard

Valery's hoarse voice—'Hide him in our room!' Pale-faced Fritz, the gentle musician, was shouting crazily: '*So eine Schweinerei!*' and a confusion of other voices was to be heard. The number of prisoners grew ceaselessly, and the strange thing was that only those from Noirmoutier were there. The crowd swept the soldiers into the gate: they did not dare have recourse to their weapons because neither the Administrator nor the sergeants were in the Citadel and there was no one to give them orders.

As the soldiers retreated, the group of prisoners moved further into the yard and seemed to be crowding round someone they were carrying.

Later I learnt it all from Auer, one of the Austrian waiters. Demeter Bistrán, true to his Noirmoutier habits, had come out of the little casemate and set off walking round and round the yard to continue his secret prophetic conversations with the Distant Ones. He had run into the soldiers on the even-numbered casemates' side and to them had addressed, probably in Hungarian, some apocalyptic denouncement to the effect that it would be as well to end the War now, for otherwise he would lose patience and intervene in competent quarters to have the whole world destroyed by way of punishment.

The soldiers, thinking they had to do with a drunk (what in Bistrán's case would never have been an ungrounded supposition), probably tried to lock him up. From this originated the argument and then the shouts and screaming.

The Noirmoutier men on the even-numbered side had immediately gone to Bistrán's help. They began a scuffle with the guard for poor, mad Demeter. First one side and then the other had possession of him till at length by the gate the prisoners won by sheer force of numbers and bore Brother Demeter off.

Only Noirmoutier men had come out at the noise of the dispute. Now the whole Black Monastery was there. So suddenly I had received an answer to my despair. I was not

even right. The Black Monastery had not been cut to pieces, but still lived.

Demeter was quickly hidden away in one of the smaller casemates. That night dreadful things were perpetrated on him, more dreadful than if he had been locked up. They shaved off his big moustache and his great forest of beard so that the soldiers should not recognise him.

The next day the Administrator in vain set a great investigation on foot. Bistrán was nowhere to be found. Instead of him there was a smooth-faced, pock-marked stranger who sneaked away from us like a village dog shorn of its fur, and of whom for many months to come no one would have believed that he had once been a prophet, with a huge beard, a ferocious moustache and a mysterious equipment of degrees.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BLACK FRIAR

It took us months to break ourselves physically to the underground life of Ile d'Yeu; for spiritually we never gave in. Prison life on Ile d'Yeu was quite other than in Noirmoutier. Here the common sufferings had never obliterated the social boundary-lines. That was left to mere debasement and sin. The raw, untamable element always ruled in Ile d'Yeu. The little intellectual leavening could never have had any effect on all those workmen, seamen, labourers, tramps and released convicts even if it had made an effort to do so. But probably it had never tried.

The German naval officers lived in complete seclusion in special rooms and with special food. Their contacts were limited to Däumling and his friends and a few of the better-looking Germans. The fifteen or twenty people of better society whom fate had brought here followed their example. The rest, about a hundred and fifty of them, suffered in dark, pitiful beastliness the Administrator's discipline and the guards' military-prison methods, and did no more than quarrel and fight among themselves. They were represented before the Administrator by a Francophile committee of three, all servility and unction.

We of Noirmoutier were different. We never formulated it in word or thought, but we were bound together by a supreme unity. Even Buchholz, who perhaps had betrayed our plan of escape, was a responsible, component part of us. He and some others were our sins and the beast in us, and yet were of one soul and body with us. The Noirmoutier Administrator's school had done good service.

This unity could not remain unnoticed on Ile d'Yeu. The defence of Bistrán the first night, incomprehensible even to ourselves, kept the Germans talking for days.

In the following weeks they had occasion to see more. First of all, the whole eighty-three of us met in the dining-room cellar and elected a special deputation to get into touch with the Administrator and, by letter, with the Red Cross in the cause of our needs and grievances. For the Austrians, Ziffer and Jantschek were elected, for the Hungarians, myself.

Gradually we all equipped ourselves with mattress-stands. This was a first necessity, for it was impossible to sleep on that filthy stone floor among the rats and mice. That being done we turned to the question of curtains and little tables, and separated off a few compartments of three or four sleeping-places each—a positive necessity when the autumn rains began and it became impossible to stay out in the yard and on the rampart.

For the rest, our way of life was much the same as in Noirmoutier. In the morning, thin black coffee was brought into the casemates in big tin buckets. Washing could only be done in the yard. There was no question of baths. We obtained disinfectants from the Administrator for the cleaning of the rooms. The post was distributed at ten o'clock in the morning. For this purpose there was a little room next to the guard-room, where an old German called Kohler sorted the letters and handed them through the window to the room-presidents.

Kohler was a well-known personage in the Ile d'Yeu prison-camp. He had charge of the post; he helped in the infirmary when the military doctor of the island paid a visit; he it was who carried out the distribution of bread; he was in close contact with the elegant Administrator and fulfilled the functions of secretary in the office. Prematurely aged, weak-stomached, with a blond goat-beard, awkward, infinitely absent-minded, he had once been the director of his French doctor-wife's nursing-home. That was the origin

of his organising ability and of his connections, for he enjoyed certain privileges in the Citadel. He lived with the naval officers, could read or work all day in his official room, and, whenever he liked, could go out under escort to the harbour of the island. He was of course a Francophile. On the whole he made it appear as if he worked a tremendous deal. Ink-stains on his fingers and sometimes on his face testified to his furious clerking. His green-faded tail-coat had holes in the elbows from much copying. His back was always floury from the bread-distribution and his shoulders were covered with scurf which one might think was the sand with which he blotted his scribblings. He used to hurry across the yard nearly every half-hour with his slouching gait, bent back and swinging arms, muttering words into his beard and scrubby moustache. He never looked you in the face when he spoke to you, asked everybody his name a dozen times over, though it was said of him that he knew everything about everybody, and that his chief recommendation in the Administrator's eyes was that he carried the prisoners' secret dossiers in his head.

I did not much like Kohler; probably because for weeks I went to his office and he never called my name out. Our post only came on here weeks late, after the Administrator of Noirmoutier had brooded over it for a couple of weeks, doing a final piece of prying.

After the post, in the quickly darkening, rainy, foggy time we read or worked by lamplight in our various little compartments. The other men of Ile d'Yeu had books to lend us, and there was even a little library sent from the German Red Cross. Novels were no fare for us then. We did better to read scientific books, especially philosophers. Kant was almost a medicine, for there was only the palest reflection of life in him.

That first winter in Ile d'Yeu Schuler and I arranged lectures in the dining-rooms every afternoon. Schuler lectured on German literature and grammar for the Hungarians and I talked about Hungarian literature to a German

audience. In my preparations for my German lectures I made the acquaintance of a very learned Bavarian bank clerk called Müller. Müller was an enthusiast for everything literary, and willingly took upon himself to polish my pidgin German into a literary style for my lectures. He was typical of his nation's intelligentsia. The spirit of Order permeated his correct, groomed being. Internment was for him not an experience but a quiet consideration of the constraint put upon him; and in consequence he kept himself healthy, developed his interests in his spare time, corresponded regularly with his wife at home, and patiently awaited the end of the world conflagration when he would again be able to take up his former position. He was an exemplary prisoner as he had doubtless been an exemplary employee and an exemplary husband before the War. In the Great Order he was a Little Order, and if that Little Order remained undisturbed all would be well. So he applied all his strength to his own preservation.

This was a typical feature of the Germans in general. They trusted to the others doing their duty at home and on the battlefield just as they were doing theirs in internment. They were strangers to brooding over the future.

We used to work in No. 51. The whole time the ordinary life of the casemate was going on with the usual awful din. We had gradually become quite accustomed to this. The separating curtain was enough for us to feel as though the noise were coming from the street, though thirty or forty men might be shouting and quarrelling in the same room. Once two Germans brawling in front of Kilar's coffee-stall fell against my curtain, tore down the whole wire, and in the next moment the whole thing collapsed in front of us, and there we were just as if an earthquake had shaken down the walls of our house and we were left suddenly with nothing but the street.

Towards the end of November some slight changes occur-

ring in the Ile d'Yeu camp, and especially in No. 51, set up a commotion which lasted for days.

Bárczy and a German with heart disease had at last been sent off to one of the bigger military hospitals in the South of France. Besides the two invalids a few Germans who had volunteered for field work also left. Of them one was from No. 51.

On the day following their departure twelve terrible-looking prisoners arrived. The news immediately spread that they were ex-legionaries who after five years' service had no desire to serve any longer in the Foreign Legion.

While the tall sergeant was taking over the new arrivals by the gateway the inhabitants of the big casemates, who were most concerned in the quartering of the legionaries, hastily came to an agreement not to let a single legionary in at the doors of their casemates. The men had nothing but hate for compatriots who had served in the Foreign Legion, and abhorred legionaries altogether; the majority of those in the Citadel were always causing disturbances in the never too peaceful casemates.

Bürger, our stout room-president, the two elder Stockers and a few of our more bulky Germans stationed themselves at the door of No. 51, forming a living wall against the legionaries who now, splitting up into groups of twos and threes, were setting off across the yard towards the various casemates.

Three came to us. One of them, a thick-set man with a little black moustache and in French workman's clothes, stepped forward and addressed the men at the door in German:

'This No. 51?'

'Yes.'

'Let us in.'

'You're not coming in here.'

'No?' said the little thick-set man, and laughed. He set down the little wooden trunk he was carrying and then with a

movement of his hand laid fat Bürger, who as room-president was in the front rank, flat on his back. Then with both short, muscular arms he so set about the others that they were sent spinning left and right. The road to the casemate was clear.

The black-moustached legionary went up the stone steps and stopped in the frame of the door, meeting the rest of us, who, furious at his violent entry, had jumped up from our places and were crowding towards him.

'Stop,' he said, in a quiet, almost gentle voice. 'There is a knife in my pocket, and I am quite ready to kill. This filthy life is of no account to me, anyhow. Why should I do you harm? Let's talk sense. Let the five strongest of you come here. Not weaklings like those I have just knocked about. I want to see some real tough lads.'

With great difficulty five powerful men were collected from among us. We were now all curious as to what this strange man wanted who had such unapparent strength and who could talk like a demagogue.

While our five men were coming forward the ex-legionary stepped further into the room, and behind him his two companions ranged themselves, keeping the room's former guard back with a mere gesture.

The thick-set man went on:

'My name is Werner. I was a circus acrobat once. One night they tried to entice my lover away from me, and I killed four men with my bare hands. I escaped from Germany and joined the Foreign Legion: but that was a long time ago. Since then I have killed a lot more men, and the whole world is following my example. Murder is fashionable nowadays.'

The acrobat's last words were spoken with longish pauses between them, for he was performing a queer act with the prisoners who had come forward. He hung two on his right arm and two on his left. As easily as if they had been mere clothes without any bodies inside them. The men hooked on his arms had to hang with their whole weight, their legs doubled up. Then he stuck his left leg out behind him and

set the fifth man on it, and with this whole group of statuary on him hopped right down the whole casemate to the wall backing on the moat.

The exhibition succeeded frighteningly well. When Werner finally shook the men off him like down he was not even panting. He came back to the middle of the room and began his oration again. Now we recognised the practised patter of the showman.

'That's me,' he bawled, stretching out his arms. 'But I don't abuse my terrible strength. I am as gentle as a lamb. But I warn you all that I don't let myself be interfered with. If anyone touches me, I kill him. I would even kill a feeble man, because even he might revenge himself when I am asleep. So much for myself. Now I will introduce my friends. Both Hungarians. This one is Tótori.'

A youngish-looking, brown-skinned gypsy fellow, with tousled hair flopping over his eyes, slouched indifferently forward.

'He looks a slight lad,' continued Werner. 'But he has muscles like bamboo-cane. Moreover, I am ready to defend him against anything, for he once saved my life when the jackals and vultures were already at me. My other friend's name is Szabo.' (A tall, blond, bent-backed, thick-necked gorilla stepped forward.) 'Once he was a railway clerk, and he went off with the till. They haven't forgotten that against him yet. But no one is inquisitive about how many men he has killed since then. That's us. And now you know us, make room for us.'

But that was another matter. It was easier to accept the new arrivals' friendship than to give them room. Only one man had left the casemate and three had to be squeezed into his place. We tried to speak the legionaries fair. Everybody had exactly as much room as his straw mattress fitted into. We would willingly take in one man in No. 51, but there was no question of three.

Werner appreciated all that, but remained obdurate. The

sergeant had told them there was not much room, and had added: 'I am sure you can make room for yourselves if you want to.'

If the sergeant had said that, there was nothing to be done. The room-president produced the measure and for the hundredth time set to measuring out room.

This was no simple operation. The curtains had to be taken down, the accustomed nooks upheaved. A ten-centimetre space set up a fight.

Especially a certain pale, scraggy German commercial traveller, Levi by name, with a red goatee, set up a great commotion. He lived at the end of the casemate towards the moat, and there was a recess in the wall half a metre deep, but not for the whole length of a mattress. This niche had been Levi's privilege for two years. Here he kept his big travelling-bag, his empty sardine-tins. Here was his larder and his wash-hand stand. There was even room for a little stool, and there Levi used to squat all day like a monkey in its cage, hidden from the rest and nibbling at the food he received from home, and reading in between whiles.

Now they exposed his den behind its curtains and boards, and made to take fifty centimetres off the whole compartment. But Levi was not taking that lying down. Foaming and spitting and choking he went for everybody, even Werner, who kicked the unfortunate old bag-of-bones about till he collapsed in a faint at the end of the room. Then they took off the necessary half-metre from his place.

Of course the empty, draught-ridden place next to me did not remain empty. I had to put my table out and to narrow my curtain. Next to me was put Werner, who had introduced himself as a fourfold murderer.

Tótori was put next to Schneider and Kilar, opposite his friend Werner. Szabo found room next to the Stockers.

The commotion of rearrangement died down in about a fortnight. The new arrivals gradually accommodated themselves to the life of No. 51. Werner and Tótori became

some of the most faithful clients of the Schneider-Kilar coffee-stall. For the rest they lay about all day on their mattresses or played cards.

Werner's proximity was at first somewhat unpleasant to me. I could see in him only the murderer and not the man. Later the fact of his criminal personality faded. I gave him some cigarettes and sometimes invited him to share what I was eating. He rewarded my attentions with little kindnesses, half pulling up his mattress by day so that my table could be fitted in again. When I was working he used to squat on his doubled-up mattress and whistle and pick his nose and arrange his thinning hair, or sometimes roll up his shirt-sleeves and make the muscles play on his tattooed arms. He could find as much distraction in himself as an animal.

Then in the evening he would tell me about his life. Tótori would come and settle on the mattress, and they set to capping each other's horrible stories. They had last been confined in a fortress in the South used as a military prison. They had escaped by a rope from a tower sixty or seventy feet high. Their escape was noticed, and one of the sentries began to shoot: then they stopped climbing, and simply slid straight down the rope.

I had to feel their wounded palms in the dark, as still remaining proof of their story.

They had succeeded in escaping from the guard, but after two weeks' nocturnal wandering and starvation they had at last voluntarily given themselves up to a police patrol. They could not stand the hunger and lack of sleep any longer. According to them there was any number of French deserters in hiding in that part of the country, all trying to escape into Spain, and living in wild, outlaw groups, like wolf-packs.

Tótori heard that I came from Transylvania. I had to tell him many things about a little town there, where his mother lived. Ten years before he had committed his fatal crime there. He wanted to go home and visit his mother.

The years passed in the Legion were more apparent in Tótori than in Werner. Werner had a considerable sense of humour and a love of pulling the long-bow. It is true he went raging mad if you disbelieved him. But if you listened without a flicker of the eyelids while he told you how once for sheer hunger they had fed on human corpses, how he alone had scattered a whole native army and so on, then he would go on peacefully telling stories for hours on end, even himself remarking that you were not to take every word of his for Gospel. The only man who had a right to be sarcastic about him was himself.

The legionaries behaved peacefully enough. Once, about a month after their arrival, Werner quarrelled with Tótori. They were playing chess, and the Hungarian made a sarcastic remark when Werner lost for the second time. The blood flew to Werner's head and he crashed his fist down on the home-made chess-board and smashed it to splinters. Then he picked up the table on which they were playing and threw it at Tótori. But that did not quieten him. He threw every mattress that came under his hand, stands and all, likewise into the air, then he went for the iron hooks set in the wall and pulled two of those long heavy iron screws out of the wall as if they had been so many loose nails. He threw those too at Tótori, and then his friend lost his temper and made to go for him.

I was standing beside Tótori and tried to stop him. I thought he would listen to me, for he was fond of me. But now the man neither saw nor heard. He brushed me aside with one push and rushed at Werner. But at that moment the strong man flung his arms wide and crashed to the ground. It was an epileptic fit. He was foaming at the mouth, and his body jerked and twitched. As long as the fit lasted no one could go near him.

Chance had it that just as the commotion was at its height there should come into No. 51 a tall, grey-haired General accompanied by the Administrator and two sergeants. The

General was on a visit to the commander of the island. Ile d'Yeu had just become important, because the American convoys had altered their route on account of the German submarines, and for some time had been taking a line which included Ile d'Yeu. The French General included the Citadel in his visit.

No. 51 was a sight to see. Shattered mattress-frames and tables were lying all over the place. The prisoners were huddled into shouting, frightened groups. And in the middle of the room a man, his eyes shut and deadly white, writhed and foamed and jerked himself about.

The very next day the legionaries were allowed to go out under escort to work in the harbour. Werner and Tótori took up watchmaker's work. Werner used to bring eight or ten broken watches and rings every day from the harbour, and used to work with Tótori—with whom he had of course immediately been reconciled after their quarrel—at repairing them.

The two legionary jewellers always lingered over the repair of the more valuable things. Then suddenly, about two months later, the order came for Werner to be sent immediately to Lyons to be medically examined.

It is to be supposed that in his great haste Werner took with him the articles of jewellery in his care. Three weeks later we received news from him that he was fighting on the German Front. Tótori was taken away at the same time as Werner. He was sent to a little Breton town, to some old people who kept a grocery shop. Two years later he wrote to me saying that the old couple had offered him the hand of their pretty, young adopted daughter—and the grocery shop. He still longed to see his mother again. What should he do? I naturally told him to accept the offer. The town where he wanted to visit his mother would have given him no such kind reception and prospects.

At the beginning of December came an unexpectedly

welcome visit. Georges, the friendly corporal of the first months in Noirmoutier, came to Ile d'Yeu in connection with his wine business and sought out his old acquaintances in the Citadel.

He called me to the canteen in the morning. He was having a drink with Monsieur Boutineau and his wife when I came into the deserted canteen-room.

'*Tiens*, Monsieur Kuncz!' he cried, as he saw me, shaking my hand with both his.

Corporal Georges had not altered much in two years. Perhaps his thick, carefully trimmed moustache had become even blacker. Apparently he needed to dye it. His dress was more civilian. He was wearing black breeches, black puttees and a dark-brown tunic which might quite well have done for a civilian shooting-jacket.

The corporal recommended me and the rest of us to the Boutineaus, and filled one of the glasses on the table. We clinked glasses.

Apparently Georges had something to say to me. First of all he settled his wine business with Boutineau. In exchange for the deal he gave him some good advice, telling him to ask the Administrator for the room under the offices, which had big windows and opened on the yard, to use as canteen. They would do better business there.

Then he took leave of the couple and in the darkness of the passage slipped a letter into my hand.

'From your friend Zádory,' he whispered confidentially in my ear. 'The censor hasn't sniffed at it. If you should have need of me I shall be looking in to-morrow.'

I went off to my room with the letter. There was no one near my place, so I disguised the letter in a book and began to read it.

There were more than sixteen pages of Zádory's great, sculpted writing. He described their journey from Noirmoutier to La Roche-sur-Yon, where they were put in a barracks prison. Here they huddled for two days without

food. Then Weiffert, the two brothers Weiner and himself were sent off to a notorious penal depot. The rest were sent to Ile de Croix. The young Budapest bank clerk had protested very stoutly and courageously against being handcuffed.

"Till yesterday we were in the worst place—St. Vaast la Hougue," continued Zádory. "We were put in a casemate where the water came in at high tide. It made a hellish din and everything was quite dark. We thought we were going to drown. We were shut up with a lot of jail-birds. Fortunately they had given me a place under one of the loopholes, and so I could work. You should see my bone miniatures. The collection has increased by twelve. My beard has grown enormous. My complexion is like the skin of a fish's belly. I spent all day chipping at my bits of bone, and the others got angry with me. It irritated them, and I never talked to anyone except Weiffert and the two Weiners. . . . Imagine, it was from the deaf Weiner that I heard they were conspiring against me to report me to the Prefecture as being mad. . . . Fortunately good old Georges turned up: he has taken it into his head to visit the prison camps wherever he goes, and to try to do something for the wretches. . . . Do you remember the judge in *Resurrection*, who was drawn to the column of exiles like iron to a magnet? He can get my letter to you. . . .

"He managed to speak to me. It turned out he knows you from Noirmoutier. So he persuaded the Administrator to do something for me. Fortunately there was a more intelligent Sub-Prefect there at the time. His attention had already been called to me through little Mastic. So they looked up my record. . . . They found the letters from Desbois, Rouchet and the rest. Against those there was the Administrator's blackening of my character. But Georges probably told them what sort of a man the Administrator was. . . . In short, yesterday afternoon, when I was quite unprepared, in came a whole committee. The Adminis-

trator, sergeants and the Sub-Prefect. The others were just in the middle of a furious quarrel. The waves were booming overhead and the water was hissing down the walls. The Sub-Prefect stopped beside me. 'You are this Zádory?' he asked, looking at what I was doing. 'Yes,' I said. 'I am the mad Zádory, and those others over there are the sane ones.' The Sub-Prefect had us moved the same day, and now I am writing in a well-lit room. There are some little trees in front of my window, and when the wind blows they stroke the glass with their branches. We are all well. Georges will be coming presently for my letter. . . ."

The letter ended with a long philosophising. If anyone else had written that last part of Zádory's letter, I should have been anxious for the state of his mind.

But we from Noirmoutier needed Corporal Georges.

The matter was the following. Three days ago Tutschek had received a letter from his wife telling him that their four-year-old child had died, and she had no money for its funeral. Tutschek's other two children had died from typhoid in internment. The woman had gone back to Austria with the remaining child in November 1914. Since then she had kept herself by laundry-work. But at the beginning of November the child had fallen seriously ill. Money was needed for doctors and medicine, and the woman had to nurse the child. The assistance she received was spent on the invalid. On November 10th the child had died. The mother had to keep a despairing vigil over the child she could not bury.

Tutschek went mad at the news. His neighbours, Fritz of the guitar and Salz, first noticed it. The otherwise meek little man had come to them with his eyes all bloodshot and wild and had asked them for a spade. He threatened them with setting fire to the Citadel and killing them all if they did not give him a spade. Fritz procured some sort of a spade-like tool from the kitchen. Then Tutschek went up onto the rampart and began to dig in the bare earth on the slope. All day he dug. Men gathered round him and asked him what

he was doing. Tutschek turned a hairy, be-muddied face towards them, and, showing his big yellow teeth in a horrible grin, whispered: 'Don't tell anybody. I am burying my child.'

From the letter left on his mattress we soon learned what had happened. And then, without ever having come together, we decided we would pay for the child's funeral. The decision was perhaps no saner than Tutschek's, who was trying to bury his dead child on the rampart. For it was nearly a month since the child had died, and it must have been buried since then. But we did not think of that. We set about the collection. Every man from Noirmoutier gave all the money he had. There were no exceptions. Bistrán did other people's fatigues all day so as to be able to contribute. It turned out that Buchholz had one last hidden gold piece. He dug it out of the lining of his coat. Riedl, who in Ile d'Yeu ran rather than walked round and round the rampart, stopped panting and wild-eyed when the collectors accosted him. He only said, 'Death? Death?' and dug every grey, red and yellow counter out of the pockets of the waistcoat hanging on his emaciated body. The others came of their own accord in pilgrimage to No. 51, where Fritz and Salz received the money. The Germans looked on un-understandingly. Indeed, no one in the Citadel knew what it was all about. Two of the men were up on the rampart watching Tutschek to see that his behaviour should not attract attention. We had decided to play his horrible game with him, and then to take care of him among us so that he should not be taken off to a French lunatic asylum, for of such places the darkest rumours had spread among us.

By evening a great heap of money had been collected. Tutschek came wearily into the room, staring unseeing in front of him. Kaiser and Hintze came after him. He stopped in front of his mattress and quietly put his spade down. There was a silence. Then Fritz got up from his

place, took Tutschek by the hand and led him to the heap of money.

'Look,' said the waiter, and his voice had all the gentle persuasiveness of a very wise doctor. 'Here is the money for your child's burial. We are going to send it off this same day to your wife. So quiet yourself. Don't try to bury it here when it died there at home. That's not a Christian thing to do. Say your prayers. And your wife will bury the little child there at home.'

Tutschek stood in front of the money, his body trembling. He was trying to collect his thoughts, but understanding shone palely in the darkness.

'Who gave it?' He pointed at the money.

'All of us,' Fritz reassured him. 'And we are going to send it off to-day.'

Tutschek only shook his head as though not believing the thing. Then softly, almost imperceptibly, he said only:

'The Black Friar. . . . The Black Friar. . . .'

Then he went back to his place. He knelt down at the foot of his mattress and remained so all night, while the men watched him.

The next day he could be persuaded not to go up onto the rampart to dig. That day and for long afterwards he was tormented by the thought that his child was lying unburied, but gradually we succeeded in persuading him back into a quiet religious mania. He lived on unnoticed in the canopy he had built over himself of prayers and devoutness, carrying out his fatigues and the simple duties of prison life with mechanical obedience.

That was why we needed Corporal Georges, for there was no question of sending the money by way of the Administrator.

So the next day, when Georges came in as he had said he would, I explained the situation to him, gave him the name of a Genevan bank and the address of Tutschek's wife, and he departed in the greatest glee at being able to undertake

it. '*Mais, quand même,*' he said in conclusion, and fairly hugged me as farewell.

On our fortnightly walks on Ile d'Yeu, just as in Noirmoutier, we were not taken into the villages of the island, nor to the seashore. But in this case not for reasons of punishment.

Quite at the beginning of internment, when we were still at Noirmoutier, it had happened that on the occasion of a walk close to the shore on a stormy day five German prisoners were caught by a big wave and drowned. The case had found loud echo, especially in the German Press. There were even questions asked in the Reichstag. They proclaimed indignantly against the cruelty of internment in France. But that case was a pure accident. The escorting soldiers did not know the shore.

The consequence was that we were not allowed to go near the sea. Only in our last year there we had a corporal who knew the country well and who sometimes took us to the ruins of an old castle on the cliff, and even once or twice allowed us to bathe.

So the walks in Ile d'Yeu were no more popular than those in Noirmoutier. We had to troop along in fours, under heavy guard, along the road or across barren fields. Even the walk round the rampart was better than that.

One day towards the end of December, a day of pelting, leaden rain, the bugle-call to the walk sounded in vain, and the tall, red-haired corporal standing with the escort jokingly invited anyone to come who liked. Some men from Noirmoutier happened to be there, and others joined, and, the news going round, we all somehow collected till the old crew was all together again—all except Dudás, who with some of the Germans had celebrated the fall of Bucarest a little too loudly, and had been in the cells ever since.

We set off in great spirits, and, the red-haired corporal not

taking the usual road, we cut across a corner of the harbour town, and so came out into the country. We passed a donkey, and greeted it uproariously. We had not seen a donkey for years. We passed through a village, and beyond it, in a field, found a cow alone, bellowing in pain and terribly distended. It calved then and there, and Leitner the ex-butcher tended it; then we wrapped the calf in our coats and set off in queer procession through the rain, calf, cow and all, towards the village where we supposed the owner of the cow lived.

On the way we met the owner, an old woman with a little handcart. Her four- or five-year-old son and a tall, black-moustached man were with her. The child had been watching over the cow, and when it had begun its desperate bellowing he had run to the village to his grandmother for help. The old woman took over the calf from its Boche midwives with many expressions of gratitude. Then they went back to the village and we went on with our walk.

After some way we came to a side-road leading to a house standing by itself and surrounded by a fence. As a positively revolutionary favour the red-haired corporal took us in to the inn with him for a drink. We filled the little place and sat on the chairs and tables and the floor. The inn belonged to two women, one oldish, the other pretty, young and deep-breasted, with whom the red-haired corporal seemed to be on amorous terms, for they smiled at each other as we crowded into the two little rooms. We drank everything that was in the place, wine, eau-de-vie, rum, and were all tipsy in a few moments. Everything became lovely and desirable. We stared in admiration at the pots of flowers on the little window-sills. We waxed enthusiastic about the tables and chairs. 'A real chair. A real old, honest, properly made chair, like we used to have at home.' Somebody picked one up, and we crowded round it, stroking and feeling it. And we shouted and shook each other by the hand as though we had just reassembled after a long time apart. Red-nosed

Buchholz in his battered seaman's cap was swearing tearfully that the failure of the Noirmoutier escape plan was the fault of Fate, while he was as innocent as that little calf we had just helped to come into the world. The red-haired corporal drank our healths and the health of the Boche who had shot him through the hand and wished us all home. He clinked glasses with everyone and shook hands—with his left hand. 'I can risk it,' he said, with a friendly grin. 'They can't send me out there again.'

We paid with prison money, which made the young woman stare. But the red-haired corporal reassured her, saying he would bring good money for it the next day. Then in the growing dark we tramped home, arm-in-arm, wondering what was the matter with us, for not kind words and the drink alone could have given us that mood.

Someone shouted mad Tutschek's mysterious words, "The Black Friar," not in fearfulness but in triumph now. It was a solved mystery. The name did not matter. He was, lived, breathed, created, acted, though we had never discussed nor agreed on his creation.

The dark bulk of the Citadel separated like a fog and the black throat of the gate lit up as we marched in.

CHAPTER XVIII

BEHIND THE SCENES

ON Christmas eve we could again arrange a Hungarian dinner in No. 51, and after it, on a primitive, improvised stage, we gave two little plays, one Hungarian and one French.

That first attempt at theatricals had a resounding success, and in the following months a positive theatrical season was the consequence. The preparations and rehearsing took a great deal of time, which was a blessing in the winter months in those ghastly, dark, cold casemates.

Schuler took most trouble about the preparations for the plays. He laid claim to practical experience, having once been editor of a theatrical paper in Berlin. We—Andor Németh, Soltész and I—helped him. We had no dramatic MSS., so we had to write up old plays ourselves, partly from memory, partly out of our imaginations. The performances were given in German, and, as great interest was shown in them, from January onwards we held them in the big rooms of the “dining-room.”

We produced everything proper to the presentation of a play more or less out of nothing. Willersdorfer painted some scenery and we added pictures to it for ornament. We sent for some cheap lining stuff from the village: this served for everything in the way of ornamentation. Willersdorfer prepared big sheets and Zsiga Nagy and the other tailors made the costumes out of them.

By the third performance we had a proper stage with a curtain and a permanent paper frame to it, on which according to the custom of provincial Hungarian theatres the coffee-makers, cobblers, barbers, tailors and commercial

agents of the Citadel advertised themselves. The gypsy Horváth organised a special theatre orchestra. It was the best of the many orchestras in the camp since Horovitz' dissolved when its conductor was transferred to a better depot. Horváth was by now an excellent violinist, could read a score and, at a pinch, could do some orchestration. His orchestra was therefore more flexible and suited to the theatre than the other better orchestra of the Citadel, which consisted of about forty or fifty guitar, mandolin and mandolo players. That was a wonderfully German orchestra. They practised with untiring zeal, twanging away at their instruments for hours every evening, and finally appeared in a great concert to which even the elegant, pale-faced Administrator came and brought a few friends from the harbour town. The mandolin orchestra played among other things parts of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. I have never in my life heard anything stranger. But Horváth had the pick of the musicians under him—Fritz of the guitar, Zsiga Nagy, Hintze, Crombeck, who knew everything about every musical instrument, Heger, the one-time circus clown, who also proved to be a good actor, Poss—Horváth somehow managed to drum a little music into him—and sometimes myself if I had nothing to do on the stage.

We had thought we should have most trouble in casting for the women's parts. But there we were very mistaken. It turned out that Dr. Herz possessed a positively genial capacity for the representation of women's rôles. We did not discover this ourselves. In the casting of the female parts we avoided altogether choosing those whose propensities to femininity were common knowledge. We had no desire to provide some of the men's feminine charms with a special opportunity of advertising themselves through the agency of the stage. They had all too many devotees in the Citadel of Ile d'Yeu as it was.

A preliminary, none too pleasant exhibition had sufficed to make us proceed with the greatest caution in the matter. In

December someone had had the idea of organising an afternoon dancing-school in the empty dining-room. Horváth and Fritz played, and the men danced.

That dancing-school was altogether a gruesome affair, but it had some quite peculiarly repugnant developments. At first the "women" were only distinguished from the men by wearing a handkerchief tied round their arms. But the dancing-school gradually attracted those of the prisoners who notoriously cohabited.

The handsome, curly-haired Count arrived with his big-moustached sailor friend. He himself wore patent-leather evening shoes; his partner was in a low-necked sailor's vest and white trousers. That lean, darkly masculine sailor needed no handkerchief on his arm to make his feminine rôle clear. He moved gracefully, with a sneaking yielding of his body, and never took his eyes off the Count. Nothing were imaginable more horrible than to see the sailor give his great, stained, hairy hand to the Count in the figures of the quadrille with all the secretive coquettishness and sensuous tenderness of a sixteen-year-old girl.

Among the frequenters of the dancing-school was a tall man of American origin, with an interesting head, who here as in Bordeaux before the War kept himself by teaching languages. He spoke perfect English, French, Italian and of course German as well. No one knew of what nationality he was. He called himself an American. For the rest he was called Varvey, which might have been French or English, but in no case German, though he was interned for all that.

Varvey once showed me a picture of himself made in Bordeaux. He looked like a second-rate Oscar Wilde without the intelligence. Even then his brain was clouded by drink.

In imprisonment he had completely given himself up to the drink. It was said that the first time he got some eau-de-vie in his hand he knelt down on the ground and prayed.

The old, staggering alcoholic's only pleasure in the Citadel besides drink was a young, flax-blond German barber's assistant. Varvey only went on giving his lessons every day so as to be able to drink and keep the German boy. Probably the only reason for his not insisting on his American origin was that he did not want to be separated from the boy.

He went to the dancing-school only to please his young friend. The otherwise very stupid, taciturn and awkward barber's assistant was completely transformed in that strange atmosphere. He laughed and skipped about and sang. He really looked as if it only needed a white chemise, blue blouse and black skirt to make a pretty little German peasant-girl of him. Varvey was not at all pleased. His friend and protégé danced much and yieldingly with others. Then there was always a quarrel afterwards, for the old language teacher was furiously jealous.

The dancing-school gradually developed into a school for women, a secret, devilish, underground den where men were moulded into women. The handkerchief arm-bands disappeared, for there were now other, secret signs. The music and the rhythm and the dancing drew out the hidden woman-traits even from those who never had any notion of there being any in them. Then in the men who went to dance there began to work more fiercely desire, which if it is repressed and violently stifled will carve itself an echo from wood and from the very cold, indifferent stone.

It was in this fashion that the Citadel's other aristocrat, a spectacled young German Baron, made the discovery of womanhood in a certain man of our Noirmoutier contingent. The German was apparently in all respects a sober, decent young fellow, but the dancing and music turned his head too. He began by inviting our man to lunch and supper. He lived in a little niche in No. 36, cut off from the world of the room, just next door to Horváth. Horváth, as Schuler had prophesied, was very ill at ease in this place. So he accepted with delight the Baron's suggestion that for a small

sum of money he should change places with our Noirmoutier man.

Nothing suspecting, the Noirmoutier man, who could imagine nothing but the merest friendship on the Baron's part, and whose humble *bourgeois* heart was very proud of it too, changed over willingly from one of the big noisy casemates to the comparatively quiet, though airless, No. 36.

At first their life together was peaceful enough. They spent all day reading or playing chess or cards. They took their dinner and supper as a matter of course always in their little compartment, the rough wood table of which the Baron used to cover with a fine tablecloth and adorn with crested cutlery. He had an anxious mother who lived near Dresden and who was always sending him luxuries. The Baron presented our friend with some glittering trifle or other nearly every day, and once, when the latter was showing me something he had just received and I ventured to suggest a warning, he at first did not understand me and then protested against such inconceivable suspicions.

Then one night from the Baron's compartment there came the sound of a lively argument and then of a struggle. Scandal broke loose in No. 36, and the end of it was that our unsuspecting friend picked up his mattress, took it out to the door opening into the dark passage to No. 36, and there passed the rest of the night all among the rats and mice.

The next day he sent back the Baron his presents, broke off his friendship with him in a short letter and moved to another place which he had to buy from a German workman for far more than what the Baron had paid when he bought Horváth's place. The blond German Baron replied to the note with a volume-long letter full of expressions of the tenderest affection, denouncing his deed as the act of madness and engaging himself never to disturb their tender relations with anything of the sort again.

The Noirmoutier man never replied. After that, morning, noon and night there lay on his mattress ever fresh coloured

envelopes from the Baron, full of terrible confession, self-humiliation and awful threats of suicide or death together. Our friend's position grew so unbearable that he moved out of No. 36 and spent all day dodging his lover as far as that was possible in their common confinement.

The Baron wrote letters all day long and in the evening went walking in troubled solitude on the rampart, measuring the height of its dizziest drop with an uneasy, desperate eye.

But the affair did not end tragically. The Baron met his faithless friend one day, flew into a hysterical fury and spat in his face, whereupon the unhappy love-affair came to a resounding end in the shape of a couple of exceedingly hearty smacks.

By then the dancing-school had been shut for some time. The committee forbade the organiser to continue the horrible business.

Under such circumstances it was understandable that we should only cast men of untouchable reputation for the women's parts. A handsome, very serious German waiter played the girl parts, and the older women were uproariously caricatured by some deep-voiced clown like Heger or Edward.

The performances were even then a success when Dr. Herz disturbed the peaceful order of things.

Dr. Herz lived a perfectly blameless life in Ile d'Yeu. He had perhaps not yet consoled himself for the disappointment he had experienced with the Czech boy. Or it may have been that his Noirmoutier romance was only a chance rush of desires, a temporary loss of control, since when his self-mastery had returned and his nerves had steadied. He was an intelligent, well-read man. He must have looked with full consciousness into his innermost being and known the agencies by which the hydra head of those distorted desires could be destroyed.

Dr. Herz, in any case, lived behind open curtains in

Ile d'Yeu. His neighbours, the Stocker brothers, were the incarnation of peasant solidity. He could learn from them the instinctive wise hygiene of their way of life. A cold shower every day however shivery and damp the weather; two or three hours' walk and any sort of bodily exercise that could produce natural sleep. Dr. Herz imitated them to some extent. Every morning his white, rounded arms and breast steamed redly from the chilly water with which he doused himself; he learnt sawing and planing and how to do the tiny work of inlaying. It is true that during his morning douches he used to squeal in a queer, thin voice and would cross his arms across his soft chest as women do; and it is also true that he only rose to any heights in the inlaying part of his joinery work where he could work away at the little, coloured wood-chips as though he were doing embroidery. But he was saved from disastrous fantasy.

So, though with perhaps not the greatest mental serenity, at least without any considerable disquiet, we could accept Dr. Herz' offer when, as Soltész and I were discussing the cast of a play we had just finished, he suddenly came up to us and, with his usual bashful look and with one of his queer, half-hidden smiles, said:

'I am afraid I couldn't help overhearing you. If you agree, I should very much like to play that woman's part.'

It was a question of a play we had made out of a French short story. There were parts for an oldish woman and a young girl. There was murder and suspicion of murder and a motherly triumph. To play the woman's part we simply had to have someone who could render a psychological study. We were afraid Heger would spoil the effect.

We gave Dr. Herz a trial there and then. He only read the part softly, half falsetto, though his voice was none the thinner for that. The performance was perfect. He was giving the illusion of a woman's voice to perfection without having recourse to conscious imitation. Besides that, Dr. Herz could act.

After that every rehearsal showed his peculiar talent from a new side. When he had worked out his own part he saw to the perfecting of the other "actress," the young German waiter, in his part, as far as the boy's incapacity and dull-wittedness allowed. It was a queer sight to watch, at undress rehearsal, the two trousered men rendering mother and daughter, Dr. Herz explaining to the boy how a girl does not simply kneel down, but falls to her knees, though performing this collapse with all grace. Her hands are never really still while she talks, patting and pulling this or that and reaching up to the back of her head; the German waiter had a lot to learn.

Dr. Herz was not sparing with his time: he was more or less all day with the boy. So that what we had feared soon happened. The German waiter gradually took the place of the Czech. The seclusion behind the Noirmoutier curtain, the long readings together, even the darning and sewing began all over again.

The trouble was on us before we properly realised it. *The Heart of a Woman* was quite complete as to scenery, costumes and rehearsal when Schuler suddenly made the discovery that the two "women" were in love with one another. The performance could not be given up. There was a lot of "money" in it, the men wanted to see it, and all the tickets were sold for the first performance.

I had never seen easy-going, good-tempered Schuler in such a rage as when he discovered the affair. He cursed and swore and got hold of the German waiter after a rehearsal and gave him as good a dressing-down as any real theatrical producer could have done. The boy began to cry dreadfully. He swore he was innocent, and from then on would avoid even the appearance of guilt. We were rather astonished that Schuler should scold the boy when he was obviously the more innocent.

The day of the performance came, and all trouble was banished at a blow. In vain we had been confined under-

ground, in vain soldiers guarded us. Woman appeared on the stage of our lives, to have an incalculable effect.

Dr. Herz' make-up was perfect. Through Madame Boutineau he had procured some woman's hair from the harbour town, and the barbers had made two wigs out of it, one for himself and the other for his daughter. He used powder, make-up, even perfume. He dressed in full woman's rig and dressed the waiter in the same. Dr. Herz wore a black dress ornamented with cream-coloured lace cut out of soft cardboard. The German waiter had a light-blue dress with a ribbon round his waist.

Their mere appearance on the stage produced a burst of clapping. It was loud enough when the girl appeared, but it turned into a positive hurricane when Dr. Herz made his first entry.

He was in every movement and in every word a perfect woman. It was a wonderful performance. He was a woman, radiant, pathetic or triumphant, and we did not know on what secret ways she had come among us.

After that performance Dr. Herz' position in the Citadel altered completely. Everyone was talking about him, wondering at him. There was no more leering about his ever-deepening relation with the young German. He could do what he wanted. He appeared in four other plays before April alone. He played the parts of an old woman and of a girl, and once acted the woman playing the boy and made us believe it was a woman playing the boy's part.

He lived among us like a fêted *prima donna*. The halo of his womanhood went with him even when he had on his usual shabby, rusty-brown overcoat, patched, baggy trousers, blue workman's sweater and his ordinary, flabby man's face with its eye-glasses and its thatching of scanty hair. Now he dared give more expression to his femininity. He was soft, attentive; for all the repugnance of his masculine countenance there was a sort of mysterious, tempting coquettishness in his

smile, in the play of his eyes and in the rich modulations of his voice.

Every morning and evening his mattress would be surrounded by a crowd of his admirers. Schuler and the whole theatrical committee became regular daily guests of his. He played the hostess. He regaled us with black coffee and tea, and somehow in that ghastly casemate he achieved the creation of a sort of *salon*, with someone for whom to be brilliant, someone whose favours were to be competed for. If you happened to wake to the reality of those nauseous surroundings, there was our hostess at her dispensation of smiles and favours like some indescribably grotesque ghost of Madame Sévigné.

I too was often among Dr. Herz' visitors. Since I had experienced his performance my attitude towards him had changed essentially. The other cases, so far from interesting me, rather filled me with disgust. Such of the men as in their confinement practised rat-like, subterranean lovings were in part exhibiting the consequences of a pathological condition beyond their control, partly were pitiable wretches driven by the fettering of their desires to an unclean narcoticism.

Dr. Herz was to be considered from another point of view. In him femininity, Shakespeare's "woman's part" combining all vileness, implied besides the fact of his perversion a talent of a very high order. And by this I do not mean the refinement of aesthetic feeling which ever since the Greeks has been the usual accompaniment of certain men's unnatural propensities. In Dr. Herz it was not culture, not merely fine artistic perception, but some inner, instinct-rooted, other-natured thing over and above what could be acquired by apprenticeship and reflexion. I had never thought there could be in a man a taint of femininity such as did not degrade him but opened new possibilities to his natural talents.

Since I had been at Ile d'Yeu I had some time ago reached the stage of finding my recollection of women, I mean the impression women make on men, dissolved into a sort of general femininity, feminine atoms, which, now that my vision was not obscured by obtruding real woman characters, I found myself detecting not only in women but in everything else. Equipped with this acute analytical kink, probably yet another symptom of my confinement, I subjected Dr. Herz to a thorough study.

So it was I came upon some very curious things which I recognised to be typically feminine attributes: and it is significant that I noticed them first not in a woman but in a man, and only afterwards substantiated them recollectively.

I have already mentioned that when Dr. Herz sewed he wore a thimble, snapped the thread with his teeth and smoothed the work with just the movements a woman uses. It might be said a man tailor has the same tricks; but he never accompanies them with the same play of expression as did Dr. Herz. To women sewing and darning and embroidery, especially when men are present, are generally pretexts behind which they may conceal their thoughts and which they very often use as a stalking-horse for their advances or to produce the impression of some inward, mysterious self-absorption indicative of a good deal when speech is inopportune. Dr. Herz presented a perfect vision of all that.

There were other little signs. For instance, he could never drink out of a bottle with a narrow neck because he so stuck the neck of it into his mouth as to leave no room for the air to pass, so that the water might slowly bubble out. I remembered how once at a picnic at home we had laughed at a pretty girl who could not drink wine from the bottle because she put it into her mouth exactly as Dr. Herz did. Apparently according to a woman's instinctive way of thinking the more liquid would flow out the deeper the neck of the bottle was put into the mouth: while the masculine, mathematical

way of thinking saw clearly that the liquid flows more easily from a bottle tilted to leave room for the air to pass.

It was the same in the way Dr. Herz lit a cigarette, which, moreover, he always held in his mouth as though unaccustomed to it, and kept watching it nervously to see if smoke was coming from it—likewise a feminine characteristic. He would push his cigarette right into the flame of the match, in the belief that it would so light better, instead of letting it gradually catch alight from the tip, which is the calculated masculine way of doing it.

These may all seem trifles. But it was not all. And, moreover, in recording these little observations and the deductions from them I do not for a moment imagine I am stating some new and eternally valid psychological symptom. It is possible the whole thing was merely evidence of my own state, and in that case everything must be seen from that point of view.

From his first success on Dr. Herz more and more freely made apparent in his words and manner the mysterious change going on in him. We may have been partly to blame. Unconsciously and without the slightest sarcastic intention we behaved towards him as men behave towards women. Even such very pronouncedly masculine people as Däumling and Nagel bowed to him, paid him compliments and brought the conversation round to such subjects as are customary between men and women: 'How well you are looking to-day'—'How did you sleep, what did you dream?'—'That man Schuler seems to be paying you a lot of attention now,' and so on.

Dr. Herz fell in with this constant woman's part in the most natural manner in the world. He was a real hostess, serving tea to his guests, all bright eyes and attentiveness to everybody. Or sometimes he would draw a few particular men aside and plunge into a conversation to the exclusion of all other interests, and in so doing made the rest of us quite frankly jealous. He was full of a woman's secrecy and in-

tuition. He had the faculty of viewing the things and life round us from an angle which had never occurred to us. His vision both of things and persons was absolutely intuitive. For instance, he never saw the Administrator as a Conception, as we did, but as a man with faults and weaknesses; and on one occasion by his advice we succeeded in extracting an important concession from the Administrator by attacking his vanity instead of insisting on our rights, as we usually did.

At that time I was much occupied with Bergson and the conclusion he reaches about instinct and intelligence. I was convinced I could seek the two basic threads of the stuff of human spirit—instinct and intelligence—in some abstract conception of femininity and masculinity. Femininity was for me a pure abstraction as it was. And this conception agreed perfectly with the Bergsonian view of instinct, while the definition of intelligence coincided with my vision of masculinity.

I made some experiments with a dog and a bitch, the two little dogs that lived in the Ile d'Yeu kitchen. I tried enticing them up a ladder which led up to one of the little bastion courts from the tunnel. The bitch, after some hesitation, always made a rush for the ladder and scrambled up somehow without touching the rungs: the dog hesitated much longer and finally always came up rung by rung. I repeated the experiment several times, always with the same result.

Here was instinct and intelligence in the primitive state. So the distinction was present in animals, and in its peculiar connection with sex, the female being apparently the guardian of instinct and the male of intelligence. The distinction could not be paramount, however, in the case of animals any more than it could be so in the case of human beings. Feminine and masculine traits, or, as I would put it, instinctive and intelligent reaction, appear mingled in all human beings (and in animals), and it is possible to trace their characteristics only in relation to deliberate abstractions.

The example of my dogs only strengthened me in the con-

viction that in man's development instinct and, to a certain degree, intuitive life did not stop at the hither frontier of intelligence but was carried further, inviolate, by femininity as an equally significant complement to purely intellectualised masculinity. Femininity is pure instinct, masculinity pure intellect, and that neither instinct nor intellect is recognisable in us in the pure state is understandable from the impossibility of reckoning any longer the partition of feminine and masculine by the standard of sex.

Bergson, probably under the influence of Schopenhauer, considers as greatest and happiest the artist's intuitive state when instinctive perception is mixed about equally with intelligence. But is not the artist's spiritual state rather a strange and mysterious mingling of feminine and masculine which implies an accompaniment of pain, because the mingling proceeds in an unnatural manner in one masculine being?

The personality of Dr. Herz made it clear to me that men could inherit not only a femininity of a low order but from a certain point of view of a higher order, which might have significant consequences for mankind. The extraordinary capacity of the life-giving creative genius might be considered as the instincts of motherhood strayed on the road of heredity into a man. It is absolutely possible to envisage a physical, not only a spiritual heredity, which then on account of physiological hindrances changes the natural flow of life-giving to imaginative or spiritual.

There has been talk before this of artist-mothers in a metaphorical sense; but to me it seemed a reality. There are all the symptoms of "pregnancy" in many a writer's foreword, and I collected all the evidence I could from the works at my disposal in Ile d'Yeu. The idea became my hobby-horse; a prisoner's hobby-horse, perhaps, and I do not present it as anything else. As far as I could I investigated such biographies as came my way in a prospective search of the families of artists and geniuses for any evidence in the female

parent or grandparents of exaggerated femininity which might be supposed to have been diverted into their male descendants. Of course I found everywhere exalted or hysterical mothers and grandmothers. It is in reality not of any great significance, but at least it appeared to reinforce my theories. And I had found another corroboration. The world does not know a real genius among women: the basis of genius being motherhood, there could be no especial psychological state in a woman, since there is no diversion and the thing is natural.

So I went on to examine the connection between motherhood and imagination. Anything that excites the mother's imagination can have a modifying effect on the child living in her womb. So there should be an organic link between the man-mother and his imagination, and it is possible to deduce the progress of gestation in the artist by working back from the imagination on evidence in his works. And I came also to deduce from the evidence of works the circumstances of the artist's fecundation through union with the life-phenomena.

And in support of my theorising there was always Dr. Herz before me in whom that mysterious femininity was becoming ever more apparent not only psychologically but physically. If I looked at that ugly, bald-headed, eye-glassed, flat-nosed man and considered his dark, straw-mattressed lying-place, ornamented with rags of cheap cloth, and if I considered his surroundings—the wild, ragged figures crowding in front of Kilar's coffee-stall, the whole foul, damp, murky casemate—and if I remembered how every morning the men would approach him with compliments and a brightening of the eyes as though they were drawing near the canopied, perfumed bed of a queen or a *prima donna*, and every afternoon would gather here the morsels of intimate social life as if they were living a *salon* life all among lovely pictures and big furniture and sounds of a piano, I could not doubt the power of this mystery that in conspiracy with Nature could steal

in through the walls of a prison to change rags into velvet, stink into scent, a world of shadow into a perfection of glittering life.

At the end of March Dr. Herz' birthday served as a pretext for the theatre management to arrange a banquet for everybody connected with the theatre.

The season was by that time drawing to its end in any case. Nature was beginning to stage a greater spectacle in the wood round the Citadel, and we began to have no desire to stay in our underground dens even for the sake of the theatre.

The material side of the productions had been concentrated in Rudi Engelsdorfer's hands. He had proved an indefatigable and excellent business man. When something had to be arranged he was applied to. He had become the financial manager of the theatre too, and the fact that he did not lose on it was proved by his undertaking the whole expense of the banquet in Dr. Herz' honour.

Soltész was stage-manager. He was a genius at improvising things out of nothing. He adapted plays and even wrote one himself, and if necessary turned actor in any capacity whatever, even to taking the women's parts. Now it was he and Rudi Engelsdorfer together who chose and arranged the place where we held our secret feast after "Lights Out" in defiance of the sentries' watchfulness. It was an abandoned cellar reached from the underground passage leading to Däumling's bastion, and Rudi and Soltész between them made a wonderfully welcoming banquetting-room out of it. Coloured lamps all round, white-clothed tables to sit at, steaming dishes and bottles of wine before us—we might have believed ourselves in some fine restaurant if we had not had to keep on pulling up our legs out of the way of the rats that scurried about under the table, and if it had not happened that three times, hearing the alarm-

signal from our look-out in the passage, we must put out the lamps, and then we were face to face with the cellar's real aspect as with some dark nightmare, while the rats made a mass attack on our food.

Everybody who had anything to do with the theatre was there. The orchestra was softly plucking out Viennese waltzes or Hungarian songs. At the head of the table sat Dr. Herz in a woman's evening dress. Rudi Engelsdorfer had insisted on this risky idea. For the first time Illusion was among us. The impression it made was amazing even to us who had often enough seen that strange womanly disguise from quite close.

Dr. Herz never overstepped the bounds of good taste the whole evening. He did even more. He created a fantastic mood for us by the kind exercise of his womanhood. We had not believed it could be true. That this witty, luxuriously beautiful woman could be there sitting among us. The scenery experts were also sitting at our table. Eckert, a little confectioner's assistant who had been interned with the Germans of Ile d'Yeu ever since the beginning, and Tauber, the butcher's apprentice. They sat goggling all evening at the woman in evening dress at the head of their table, and hardly ate anything. The two theatrical hairdressers, Wachsmann and Wildner, were in no less perturbation, though they had made the wigs for the vision's bald head.

But Soltész, Németh, Schuler and Heger were seized by a most unaccustomed, almost solemn embarrassment, and the ever-gallant Dudás, who was there in his capacity of assistant stage-manager, displayed as courteous an adulation on the lady's left as though he were sitting beside an heiress of his home county.

Dr. Herz was not acting, he was himself. Perhaps it was this subconsciously apprehended genuineness that induced the men, usually quick to rise to a none too drawing-room good-humour on such occasions, to moderate themselves. Everybody had his jealously guarded "freedom clothes" on,

and everybody surrendered himself to the insane illusion of dining in some happy land with free and decent men in the society of some extraordinarily beautiful woman. All the colour was not of the room's bright decoration. When the lights went out as the sentry came near the whole thing suddenly dissolved into darkness like some splendid vision of a dream. But the light returned, and then we thought it was the repeated darknesses that were the dream.

In all the cheerfulness the little German waiter was the only one who was unhappy. He was sitting somewhere down at the bottom of the table, and no one took any notice of him. The simple boy must have felt aggrieved that his protector and friend was surrounded with so much adulation and glory and not a ray of it all fell on him. The sullen young fellow looked likeable enough, almost pitiable. I doubt if he realised in his simple soul what was hurting him and what his grievance was.

Well past midnight the mood grew noisier. The table-order broke up. The musicians dared to play louder and some men began to sing. Fritz sang his rather melancholy selection. But the melancholy was accepted as part of the illusion, and no one was saddened. Of them all I think only the German waiter's bitterness grew and his heart sank lower. It must have been so, because all at once Dr. Herz, who was sitting between Schuler and Dudás, the object of a bombardment of tender advances, looked across at the little German waiter, steadily and with shining eyes, and almost imperceptibly motioned him to come nearer.

Schuler especially was displeased at the German boy squeezing in between Dr. Herz and himself without ever having asked permission. The conversation began to hang fire. Dudás went over to the musicians and the gloom changed from the little German's face to Schuler's. Then just for a moment Dr. Herz' white, dimpled hand strayed to touch the German's red paw lying on the table. Schuler turned white and got up, then staggered out of the room,

knocking over chairs as he went. Everybody thought he was drunk. No one took any notice of him. And the general mood grew more and more exalted. Horváth and his crew were playing the operetta in which Dr. Herz had appeared as a man. For a moment Dr. Herz looked after Schuler with a flush of confusion, then bit his lips and purposely did not take his hand from the boy's. The musicians played louder and he, with a little scented handkerchief which he held in his free hand, stroked lightly in time to the music the boy's flaming, bovine face.

About an hour later I went away. I could not stand the smoke and thick air any longer. I said good-night to Németh and Soltész and slipped quietly out of the cellar's dark, half-blocked entrance.

Outside in the passage, in the faint light of the night coming in through the opening onto the bastion court, I saw the outlines of Schuler's stout figure. He was leaning against the lower wall running under the opening, sobbing.

That desperate man weeping in the still night made me shiver. From what had happened I already had an idea what was the matter, but I had not thought Schuler was so hard hit. I went up to him and put my hand on his shoulder. The big man turned towards me, and when he recognised me, fairly collapsed against me with a terrible outburst of crying.

'I can't stand it any longer, I am going mad. You might as well know now, you too, that I love the man, more than I've ever loved anyone in my life. I don't know if he is a man or a woman. I don't want anything from him. I only want to see him always and hear his voice. I swear to you by everything that's holy that I have never even touched his hand. It's not physical desire that is driving me. It is much more. I shall go mad without him. When I am with him I feel no pain or trouble or anxiety; but when he is not with me I am afraid, afraid of the mud and the dirt and that sort of ratty loving. . . . That's why I hate that idiotic bumpkin he has chosen for himself. I could kill him.'

I listened to that horrible confession aghast, and when I tried to say something my words cannot have rung very sincere, for Schuler suddenly recoiled from me and only still held my arm.

'You think I am mad too, don't you? Or you think I am drunk,' he whispered hoarsely. 'I may be mad, but it isn't drink. It's more than a month since this feeling got the better of me. I know it's an impossibility. I have tried analysing my feelings soberly, laughing at myself, cursing myself. And still it's no good. It's horrible, horrible. . . .'

Suddenly I saw Schuler's life in review since I had known him, from the first moment when he had called Dr. Herz an *ekelhafter Mensch* till now. So prison fever had seized him too. His tortured nerves had expelled pure desire and it had returned in the form of a horrible spectre. I tried to talk to him quietly. It was all only a nightmare of nerves and imagination. He calmed down a little, and then left me. He said he must go back to make his peace with Dr. Herz.

I stumbled away along the dark passage. It was as though that first warm, real spring night had had a maddening, magic influence on every hidden desire. As I went along the dark tunnel here and there couples separated, and, keeping close to the wall, drew deeper into the darkness. Perhaps it was lust, too, that softened to strengthlessness the rat-bodies my feet stumbled over.

I came out on the yard and breathed deeply. Yet as I came out from under the trees I was greeted by a still more horrible Vision of Love above the yard, under the sky and the stars. That night all the owls from the moat had flown hither, and, like black rags thrown into the air, were fluttering, whirling and swooping in close and noiseless flight in the shining, scented air. They were all there.

The eternal circlers from the moat would disappear from the magic ring to fly and flutter beside, over, on each other with mysterious hootings and long-drawn screeches. Sometimes the sky was darkened with them, then again they

scattered, fell away from each other in aimless flight as though a secret, underground hand had thrown a huge black flower up to the sky and the wind had torn apart and scattered its petals.

The yard was still and dead. On its moonlit surface only the host of owls drew their restless shadows. And above the black birds' devilish ecstasy the dome of the sky smiled, gleaming pure in the peace of eternal laws.

CHAPTER XIX

PLEASURES

THE next day and in the weeks following a steel-blue sky was over us, a warm spring sun was shining and the air was full of scents. Fresh green grass covered the sloping sides of the rampart above the casemates. The trees in the hollow of the yard burst into leaf. The kitchen dogs lay out in the sun blinking at the light with eyes bleary from the dark winter. We followed their example. Everybody was out in the sun. Our mould-covered, bug-ridden things too. The yard became suddenly small from the light, the many men famished for the warm air, the host of rugs, mattresses, coats and suits.

It was difficult to believe in last night. Where was the horrible vision of the rats and the owls and the men loving men? It had all sunk into the background away from the sunshine, had dissolved like mist. Schuler was walking cheerfully with Dr. Herz and Engelsdorfer. No one could have detected in Dr. Herz the *décolleté* apparition of last night. His shabby, dark-grey trousers bulged over his monstrous clogs. His eye-glasses gleamed again above his thick nose. The little German waiter, his shirt-sleeves rolled up, was peeling turnips in the kitchen. Soltész and Németh were reading up on the rampart. I was having an English lesson from Varvey, walking up and down the while. A rowdy game of skittles was going on at the bottom of the yard. Brunner, Däumling and Co.'s servant, was carrying the improvised tennis-net under his arm; Dudás was in white trousers and had a racket in his hand and was meeting Kaufmann, who had been a champion in provincial German tournaments and had badgered the German Red Cross for

years till they had sent him some rackets and a few balls, when they had proceeded to make a tennis-court in the middle of the stony yard. The water-cart rumbled creakily through the gate: after it came the other cart bringing bread from the harbour. Kohler opened the little window of the post-room and stood bareheaded there with the sun playing coyly on his baldness while he read out the names. Weber and Neuhaus were standing half-naked in front of the big iron barrel, sluicing the cold, bright water over each other out of a tub. Riedl was already panting round the rampart, muttering to himself as he ran. Sometimes he would stop facing the sun, stretch out both arms till they cracked and then set off running again. The elegant Administrator was leaning on his elbows at the open window of his office, holding his pale face up to the sun. Scrubbing and cleaning was going on in the rooms. The Germans were walking across the yard between the two rows of the casemates, four or five of them together, across and back. . . .

The madness of our desires and senses which had played with us in our abandonment as a windstorm plays with torn paper evaporated as the mould off our clothes. Of all the mysteries only one still lived among us, and his shadow was only a shade darker than the blue of the sky. Sometimes we saw him straddle us as the dwarfs saw the monstrous, playing Gulliver. We still called him the Black Friar, though at such times there was nothing of black in him.

The spring and summer months of 1917 brought us news of such changes in the world that our hopes of release and of the end of the War revived. It was only autumn and winter which screwed the coffin-lid tighter and tighter.

In the confusion of the first months of the Russian revolution we realised with great relief that the thought of a final settlement was more and more in sight, and that people were beginning to say straight out that they wanted not annexations

and indemnities, but peace. And at first we held America's intervention to be aiming above all at a just peace.

From letters and from remarks dropped by our French guards when in confidential mood we gathered that the despair on both sides was equally great, that want, poverty and the senseless slaughter were preparing the road to revolution equally well on both sides. No more parcels came from the German or Austro-Hungarian Red Cross now, and whatever we got was due to the generosity of the Spanish Red Cross. On the other hand, want was beginning to make itself felt on the French side, and we were the first to know it. Often tobacco or sugar were not to be had at the canteen even for real money, and our daily ration grew more and more pitiable. We thought then that America was only mobilising in order as quickly as possible to bring about an honourable peace.

The last spring's many-hued prospects opened before us. We did not know that soon the air itself was to corrupt and that we were to count dead among the dead the love of our generation: the ideal of democratic Europe.

The hut Däumling and his friends had built in one of the bastion courts gave us the idea of taking possession of the courts in question and building primitive hut-shelters there. We needed the Administrator's permission. He was supposed soon to be leaving and not to be occupying himself much with the conduct of the camp's affairs. We caught him in a good mood and he gave us permission to use the bastion where the Däumling party's hut was. Our example encouraged others of the Noirmoutier men: Zsiga Nagy and his assistants, with the two barbers, obtained permission to build in the bastion on the even-numbered casemates' side; Jacob Vantur built a canvas shelter for himself—and even more for his ever-increasing collection of jumble—in the bastion which was entered from the kitchen passage. Afterwards Fritz and his friends built a music hut.

These sheds were all more or less the same, sacking or old sails stretched over a framework of lath. This formed

the outer walls. The inner walls were contrived out of cardboard and paper. On the top of the whole thing we put a roof of the same materials, and the contrivance was daubed outside with tar. Some men cut little windows and installed improvised stoves. Our own hut had the upper half of its walls open, verandah-fashion.

Then gardening became somewhat of a fashion. We dug up the floor of the bastion and sowed flower and vegetable seed. The practical-minded Germans planted lettuce and radish in the little flat places on the sides of the rampart. They had seed sent from Germany, or got it from the harbour town, more especially from the chemist, who was a great gardener. We sowed climbing plants round the walls of our hut and along the thick bastion wall, which rose about nine feet from the floor and on the other side disappeared into the depths of the moat. Later, we built the unfortunate Tutschek a hut in that court. Just at that place climbing nasturtiums flourished in incredible luxuriance and completely overran with their reddish-yellow flowers the shelter where the unhappiest man in the world was all day praying.

There were two German athletes who used to do exercises every morning till midday on the side of the bastion floor towards the rampart. They were both gentle-mannered young fellows. We offered them possession of the corner where they did their exercises, and thereupon they stuck two branches in the ground and stretched a rug across between them and a ledge in the wall. That was the fourth summer-house in our court. When they had finished their exercises they used to retire into their shelter and read. The elder one favoured simple, sentimental things, and the younger, his pupil, used to read English books with a dictionary.

We would have quite a number of guests in the afternoons. Sometimes thirty or forty of our old Noirmoutier lot would be squatting on the ground in front of the flower-covered verandah or on the paths between our vegetable beds; Zsiga Nagy enviously among them, for his party had a court with

stone paving, and they had only been able to grow their flowers in wooden boxes.

At the end of June the Administrator actually did go. We never really knew him, and we did not know if his departure meant something good or bad for us. He had come little into contact with us and took little notice of what we did. He entrusted everything to his lieutenants, the two sergeants, who maintained discipline, and to Kohler and his assistants, who did the office work. Of the two sergeants, the long, lean one with the perpetually discontented expression was told off to deal with us, and the other, a loud-voiced ex-African legionary, somewhat of a sadist, was in command more of the soldiers. Administrative affairs fell into the hands of Kohler, the one-time nursing-home director, the Citadel's maid-of-all-work. One of his lieutenants was a man called Leitner, who called himself a German Pole, and enjoyed general dislike, and who did the marketing. The other was a blond, friendly Austrian bank clerk, Zaruba, who spent all his day adding up accounts in a place by the window of No. 54. He still had his sleeve-protectors of black, glazed cotton, and he still always put them on though the sleeves of his coat had long ago grown shiny and torn. Zaruba did not call himself a Czechish-Austrian, though he would have had every right to do so.

The Polish-German had a finger in every pie. If tobacco was difficult to get, if there was no tinned milk or sugar or salt or bread, Leitner had to be applied to, and he perhaps very graciously procured something at an exorbitant price. Everybody believed he put a large proportion of the money for the prison food into his own pocket. The men hated him for it, and once wanted to give him a thrashing. But the kitchen chief was never to be found in the Citadel by day, and only slipped in towards evening under protection of some soldiers, to disappear immediately into his own room in one

of the little casemates next to the kitchen, where he admitted only his most trusted men. For he had four or five men among whom at night-time it was his pride to be first, as by day he was the least of the Administrative officials.

The new Administrator arrived with a little soldier's trunk. He was wearing a dark-blue knickerbocker suit; by all appearances it was his only one. As he stopped in front of the Citadel gate and proudly surveyed the extent of his kingdom he reminded us a little of the Administrator of Noirmoutier, only that this man was short, his face was a sort of bluish-red, and he wore a drooping, bad-tempered, catfish-like moustache. He probably meant to increase his small stature by the exercise of his authority, just as the Noirmoutier Administrator had tried to conceal his flabby fatness. The same rather ridiculous, conceited pose served a different but similar end in each of them. For the rest, our new Administrator had been at the front, had had his hand shot to rags and had come straight from hospital to the command of the Citadel of Ile d'Yeu. In a few days he had grasped the situation. He kept on Kohler, Zaruba and Leitner, but set to checking everything carefully, on the principle that if anyone ought to profit, he ought.

At the time of the new Administrator's installation the German naval officers and one or two other Germans chosen for a better fate or for a penal depot were taken away. In their stead came four Hungarians, friendly Otto of Périgueux—returned from agricultural work—a barefoot Czech prophet and a few dilapidated-looking Turks and Bulgarians collected from all over the place.

The new arrivals set up a commotion in our lives that lasted for days. Of the Hungarians we were meeting again the young Budapest banker's son, who had been taken away from Noirmoutier in that famous penal convoy composed by Ch——. There was nothing left now of the once well-fed, well-groomed, well-washed young banker's son who in Noirmoutier had still seemed such a polished, particular,

trim little fellow. There was only skin and bone left of him; his face and whole body were covered with sores. He smiled ruefully as he showed us his palms all cracked and horny. He had spent eight months working on a peasant's farm. On account of his increasing infection with sores and his constant fever he had reported himself for medical examination, and he had only been brought temporarily to us. He hoped soon to get into hospital in Roche-sur-Yon, and from there perhaps his connections could have him sent to Switzerland.

When he and the rebellious Popper, Maravics, Neufeld, Schnitta and Kopolovits, the one-time waiter at the Hazám, had left Noirmoutier they had been taken to the penal depot on Ile de Groix, where they had been put through a terrible time. They were submitted to an inhuman sort of discipline; the number of their guards was greater than that of the prisoners confined in the casemates. The others he had still left there when, through his connections, he had succeeded in being accepted as a volunteer for field-work. Popper and Maravics had received hypodermic needles and belladonna hidden in a cake sent from home and had given themselves a violent course of treatment to make heart cases of themselves. He had heard that they too were probably destined for the hospital of Roche-sur-Yon. They might meet again, and if they had great luck they might be sent together to Switzerland.

The banker's son did not complain of the months of his farm apprenticeship, though he had had to work for a solitary old skinflint of a peasant who had specially chosen the soft little fellow at the sort of slave-market where the peasants chose their men because he did not look as if he would eat much.

There was nothing left of friendly Otto's good-humour. His wife had died in some little German town while he was out there and he had only now, six months later, heard of it.

He gave us news of some of our old Périgueux acquaint-

ances. The "Colonel" was still doing field-work. He had got a good place and was contented. The hunchbacked "Captain" had at last been sent home. For a while they had had working with them the German sculptor who had immortalised the ugly Administrator of Périgueux. Then suddenly the police came for him, handcuffed him and lugged him off, and they never heard any more of him.

At that time I was making up a list for the Budapest Red Cross of the clothes and needs generally of the Hungarians in Ile d'Yeu. Most of them had hardly anything at all; and without whole and somewhat warmer things it would be impossible for them to stand another winter in the Citadel. In making the list I made the acquaintance of the three new Hungarians. Only one of them was in need; a young man with an interesting head, sunburnt bronze-red, who had only a blue workman's overall and one set of very much darned and patched undergarments. He did not even report himself of his own accord. He was brought along by the other two—Grünfeld, a very pleasant, cheerful ladies' tailor, and Wolfner, a better-looking, earnest, bearded furrier who a few days later was put into that certain draughty place in No. 51 which was so unpleasant as generally to remain empty.

Grünfeld explained that the young Hungarian had absolutely nothing, so I could write him down under every heading—for a coat, suit, underclothes, in short, everything.

The blue-bloused young fellow told me his name:

'Jankovits.'

Hearing the name I looked at him for a moment, and a vague remembrance arose in me of a very well-dressed Hungarian scholarship painter whom I had met once or twice before the War in some Parisian coffee-house. As a feeler I asked him what occupation I should put down beside his name.

'Workman,' replied Jankovits with rough reticence.

Only some weeks later I learnt that I had been right. Jankovits was put into the room where Valery and his friends

were, and they began to relate how the newly arrived workman painted very fine pictures. So I sought him out.

'It doesn't matter,' he said, when I apologised for not having recognised him at first. 'I don't think I should have done so myself.'

He made a gesture of dismissal, as though thrusting all that back into the past. But for a moment he had smiled, the ghost of a radiant smile. Then I remembered. He had always smiled like that. Now I remembered how a mutual friend and I had one morning gone to see him in his hotel room and had read him a lecture on allowing himself to be plundered by some unscrupulous, ne'er-do-well colleagues of his. Later, I had learnt that our lecture had absolutely no effect on him. The boy had given his whole scholarship away and was living in Paris in the greatest poverty, though not in the least in Bohemian fashion. He never went back to Hungary, though through his connections and relations there he could very well have prospered.

He must have gone through a time of great mental crisis, but he never spoke to anyone about it. He never even told us what had happened to him since the beginning of the War. To the question why he had come to the prison-camp he only answered abruptly:

'I have got a feeling that we are going home soon. And it's high time I went home.'

His room-mates liked him very much. If he earned anything with his work he bought canvas and paints. He never drank and never smoked. He had painted some wonderful pictures of the Turks with whom he had worked on a big farm in the Vendée. Then he had given the pictures away.

Grünfeld, coming back with me from my visit to Jankovits, advised me to go and see the Turks, for there were no such dancers in the world. And he ran off to his room to fetch his guitar, on which he could twang a few tunes learnt from the Turks during their time together.

The Turks' little casemate stank like an animal's pen.

Three Turks and two Bulgarians lived in the tiny room, which otherwise served as a punishment cell. When we came in the three Turks were squatting on the floor, brewing something or other over a spirit-stove. They did not move. Grünfeld treated them like animals. He pulled one's hair, tweaked another's ear, patted the third's head. 'This little fat one is Jusuf, the thin one with the big eyes is Sakir, and the third hasn't got a name. They were belly-dancers in some travelling circus.'

The Turks took no notice of us. Their whole attention was concentrated on the food sizzling in the pan.

Grünfeld stood on the straw meant for their beds and began first to play and then to sing in a thin, wailing, woman's voice.

At first the Turks only grunted and grumbled among themselves and kept on lifting the lid of their cooking-pot as if they were waiting for the moment the food should be ready. But at last Jusuf could not stand the queer, shrilling melody any longer without moving. At first only the upper part of his body began to twitch and sway, then suddenly he stood up, and the fat, thick-set little man began to twirl round on one leg like a demented bobbin. At that Sakir gave a shout, jumped up too and began a strange belly-dance on his own in front of the furiously twirling bobbin, while the third Turk set to jumping up and down all round the fire. This wild performance went on for minutes. The lid of the cooking-pot was knocked off and the contents of the vessel spilt all over the floor. They took no notice. Sakir grabbed up the spirit-lamp and brandished it like a ghostly torch as he moved about among the other two, yelping and growling dismally and with his stomach twitching all the time as he bent now to the one dancer, now to the other, as though he were urging them with him into dizzier and dizzier spinning.

At last Grünfeld grew hoarse and his fingers stiffened. The Turks went on whirling round even when the music stopped, as the wheels of a machine will go on turning after

the current has been switched off. Then they gradually slowed down, revolved giddily once or twice more, and sank to the ground.

Sakir played the light of the spirit-lamp on their pale faces, with shut eyes, then turned to us with a grin and asked us for a cigarette. When we left the cell Sakir was again peacefully squatting on the floor. He was shovelling the spilt food with both hands into a heap in front of him and calmly beginning to eat it.

Outside in the yard a great crowd had collected round the Czech prophet, who at such times in the evening used to preach his doctrine to the assembled prisoners. He was a splendid figure of a man. He had the head of an Apollo crowned with brown curly hair: he had the features and the line of the nose of a classical statue. Intelligence and the fire of enthusiasm shone from his big blue eyes. His dress consisted of an open-necked white shirt and blue canvas trousers. He went barefoot, and his feet were perfect. The astonishing and alienating thing about him was that from the mouth of that perfect specimen of manly beauty there proceeded a stream of drivelling nonsense, as though for a joke Nature had made a wonderful vase only to fill it with a disgustingly bad-smelling liquid. It was just possible from his confusion of words to gather that he preached some millenary creed. The reign of the prophet was soon to come, the only condition still lacking being that man should cast off everything superfluous in dress, food and distractions.

"Handsome Karl" at any rate for his part did everything to facilitate the coming of the Golden Age. He did not preach water and drink wine. He never touched meat and preferred to eat vegetables raw. He had a horror of smoking and drink. When his preaching led him to condemn smokers and drinkers he roused hot opposition or outbreaks of sarcastic ribaldry among his hearers. He said the universal Church was already in the building, but smokers and drunkards were always undermining it.

One of the prophet's loudest opponents was Edward. At first he listened contemptuously, at the most interrupting now and again with a sarcastic remark that set the others off into noisy laughter. But in the end the two adversaries came face to face. "Handsome Karl" said dreadful things to Edward. He called him a walking bit of putrefaction, a monstrous germ. But he said it all in the quietest of voices. His calm and the loftiness of his eloquence were of such proportions that little, ugly, toothless Edward lost his mocking temper. He stamped furiously, went up to the prophet, spat at him and called that calm, extraordinarily beautiful man a "sainted ——hole"—and the man merely went on cooing his anointed intonations like an organ.

In the end the guard decided the quarrel by scattering the audience and clapping "Handsome Karl" and Edward both together into the cells like a couple of drunks.

It was a long, fine summer. The tomatoes reddened fatly in our little bastion garden, the green pepper ripened, the creepers' coloured, sweet-smelling curtain of flower climbed and overran our hut.

We used to spend the whole day in the open air. We grew sunburnt and stronger. We revived games and went on the walks. The new Administrator took no notice if the red-haired corporal or the goat-bearded Bourasso, whom we had known in Noirmoutier, sometimes took us to the shore.

Those were good walks. If the guard was not looking we slipped out of the ranks, slithered breakneck down the big steep cliffs of the shore and dashed fully dressed into the water. We had a mad, greedy lust to melt into the element, to soak the cool salt water in through every pore. We would swim for a few minutes till we found some place where we could land again and slip back to join the rest, who were continuing their walk high above us. If we could rejoin the ranks in our clinging, dripping clothes without the guard

noticing us, all was well. If they caught us just as we were slipping back, three days' confinement was the penalty.

That did not matter. Perhaps we needed the excitement of that breakneck way down to the sea to find such utter self-oblivion and delirious happiness as we met the waves.

Sometimes we were taken straight to the flat shore where there were no rocks where we might have slipped away from our guards. Then we could only look at the sea, all still in the sunshine.

The incurable materialists used to hunt for shell-fish and crabs along the shore. They found other things too. Once they found a whole case of cheese and a sealed tin of biscuits washed up on the beach. They must have been from the stores of some American food-ship, stores meant for the French army: and we ate them.

I came to see more of the American help. For some time the parcels arriving for us by the boat had been brought up from the harbour by the Austrian waiters. Before that some German seamen had done the work, but they had incurred the suspicion of themselves contributing to the spoilt and pilfered condition of the parcels. The Austrian waiters took to weighing the parcels at the boat station and in the Citadel. A couple of weeks' trial of this checking system proved that the unfortunate German seamen had been wronged. The proportion of losses in the parcels had not changed in the least since they did the work.

One day in August Kaiser asked if I would go down to the harbour with them for the parcels. The Germans were expecting a big remittance of tobacco from the Spanish Red Cross. There was of course great excitement in the Citadel. Tobacco had run out weeks ago, not only in the canteen but in the whole island; to obtain a chunk of shag one had to pay Leitner a preposterous sum of money. The Germans were holding a meeting in the dining-room to discuss the distribution of the stuff as we, in an atmosphere of tense expectation, trundled the clumsy two-wheeled cart out into

the yard and set off to the harbour. Besides Kaiser there came Auer, Neuhaus, Hintze the fiddler and the broad-shouldered Tauber—specially designed for unloading parcels. This momentous transport party was accompanied by two armed soldiers.

We dropped down the hillside in the blazing August heat. The harbour was fairly empty. Some blue-smocked old dockers were lying asleep on the breakwater's stone parapet. The row of houses along the shore looked quite lifeless. The dry masts rattled and creaked in the sun like old furniture.

The boat was late, and we sat down on the hot stone, dangling our legs over the oily-green water deep below us. Once a boat moved out lazily, passed us sluggishly, and at the end of the breakwater turned and with her brown wings softly stroked the last hut on shore in farewell. Among the many sleeping little boats this one also seemed to have set off in her sleep.

Suddenly the happy, contented peace was shattered by the roar of aeroplanes. The machines were flying comparatively low. The roar of their engines filled the harbour as though suddenly a hail of clashing, roaring, hissing iron splinters were pouring from a gathered cloud. The slumbering workmen started up, rubbing their eyes, children and old women poured out into the street from the doors of the shops on shore. It seemed the sleepy water of the harbour started away and the masts bent as that booming tempest, trailing its great shadows, passed over us. Suddenly the harbour was full of people. The world changed. The laziness and sleepiness vanished and now there were only wildly shouting people, all with their heads thrown back, mouths agape, both arms flapping as though they themselves were trying to fly, staring at the glaring sunlit sky and at the four aeroplanes heading in steady flight for the French mainland.

The next minute the noise and cheering suddenly rose to a delirium. The people were all running towards one end of

the jetty, climbing on to the stone pillars, the roof of the shed, jumping into the boats, swarming up the masts, all looking in one direction, shouting now a hundredfold: '*Les Américains . . . Les Américains.*' At first we did not know what had happened. It was only when we stood up on the handcart that we too saw the strange sight that had driven all these people crazy. Far out to sea, like huge monsters of mist, stretched the unending line of ships. They were all American ships. In front went smaller mine-sweepers, on the sides the gunned and armoured monsters of cruisers, and in the middle the long, towering battleships. At that distance everything looked light and filmy. It was as if clouds sinking down to the sea had played at taking those shapes. One would have thought a wind would have blown them away. We only realised it was no mist and no play when we looked at the madly cheering people. They knew what it meant. Food, gold and fresh troops. Fresh, healthy blood for the dying body. And they still went on cheering and shouting and waving handkerchiefs when those great misty constructions had faded and disappeared over the horizon.

Meanwhile the little island boat had arrived. No one took any notice of it. It hooted hoarsely with desperate outpourings of steam till people realised it existed.

And we were afraid. Here was not merely the continuation of the War preparing, but the world catastrophe.

The passengers of the island boat disembarked. We pushed our cart onto the jetty and began the loading of our parcels. The Spanish Red Cross' remittance of tobacco actually had come, in three big chests. Besides these there were some twenty or twenty-five smaller parcels for different men.

Sweating and panting we hauled our cart up the hillside. The iron gate opened clanging for us and we rumbled through the echoing archway to the yard. Inside, the cart was suddenly surrounded by a fiercely arguing crowd. Clearly something had happened while we were at the

harbour. For a minute we forgot the passing American ships and the cheering crowd down in the harbour-town.

With great difficulty we arrived in front of Kohler's room, and unloaded. The parcels had still to be passed by the sergeants before being given out. When I came out the Austro-Hungarian Committee members explained what had happened. At the Germans' meeting in the dining-room it had been decided, after a furious debate and by a small majority of votes, not to divide the tobacco equally between themselves on the one hand and the Austro-Hungarians, Turks and Bulgarians on the other, but only to give the latter a third share. At that none too brotherly division the better-class Germans had protested vigorously, declaring they would refuse their share and notify the German Red Cross of the affair if the proposal was carried. In Noirmoutier they had received an equal share of a parcel from Budapest.

But Leitner's proposal—the idea was the German-Pole's—won in spite of everything. They silenced the better faction by saying it was easy for them to talk because they had money and got parcels from home in any case. Then since the German deputation would not undertake the distribution according to that scheme, they elected three delegates to see to the proper execution of their decision. Leitner was not one of them. Even the supporters of his motion were in doubt as to its being advisable to entrust him with anything of that sort.

The affair was certainly unpleasant for us all. The Austro-Hungarians gradually gathered round as we deliberated, and before we knew where we were we were holding a National Assembly. Our decision was not difficult, for we were in harmony, new-comers and old Noirmoutier men alike. Some at first were for uncompromising fury, some were for bargaining, some for having the whole parcel put under lock and key till written instructions should come from Spain. But in the end we were unanimous in not accepting

the offered third share, though we would ask those Germans who had been for the just partition to take our share, and from them we would accept an occasional offer of a cigar or cigarette. In the evening everyone was smoking away peacefully in the yard. Bistrán, for example, was a walking tobacconist. Everybody had forced things on him and stuffed his pockets with tobacco. It was not only the people who had not voted for the motion who forced their little presents on us.

During August and September I went out several times more to the harbour. I went to the baker's, the draper's, the chemist's and the butcher's.

The baker's shop was tucked away in a little side-street behind the row of houses along the sea-front. The bread was baked in the basement of the shop. When we arrived there with our cart a half-naked lad with one leg was taking the bread out of the hot oven with a long-handled baker's shovel. His curly hair was all floury and the muscles tensed on his arms. Sometimes he wiped the sweat off his brow with the back of his hand and grinned up at us cheerfully as we stood in the entrance to the cellar watching him or the passers-by in the little street with a queer fascination. A brown-faced girl in a white dress came along, carrying a red-bound book in her hand and wearing light, plaited leather sandals. She must have been a stray excursionist from some bathing-place. We thought she was wearing gossamer-fine stockings, but it was only the bronze of sunburn that covered her shapely legs. She did not look at us as she passed: though it might have been her body was naked for the way we watched her.

I went to the draper's with Zsiga Nagy's crew. In the long, dark shop were three pale-faced girls behind the rolls of cloth displayed on the counter. They kept a respectable distance from each other, and were probably sisters, for they

were very much alike. They answered our greetings with a gentle smile and in strangely ringing voices, but they did not move from where they were, but just stood waiting with downcast eyes in pale secretiveness, as though they had been standing there waiting for ever.

In the chemist's spotlessly clean shop we were almost overcome by the profusion of scents. A fat but very lightly walking man in a white drill suit came forward. On his broad head the grey, much-oiled hair was carefully parted. Cheerful blue eyes looked at us out of a smooth, clean-shaven face. He looked more like a collector than a chemist. There were stuffed exotic birds and sea-monsters and enormous sea-shells on a shelf. There was an aquarium and a cage with bright-coloured birds in it. We were almost afraid to ask that strangely soft-footed man for such prosaic things as iodine and cotton-wool and aspirin. The chemist had seen and travelled much. When he heard we were Hungarians he mentioned the name of a certain rich proprietor of the Vendée whose wife was also Hungarian. He took us into his garden, and after disappearing behind its bushes for a moment came flitting back to us bringing us each a real Hungarian paprika.

At the butcher's there were more material delights in store. The red-bearded, milky-faced, tubby little man knew all about the administrative affairs of the Citadel. He had been providing the meat for the last three years, and probably connived with Kohler, and especially the new Administrator, in the drawing-up of accounts. So he was not afraid of anybody. Once Zsiga Nagy and I had permission to do the marketing and went off down to the harbour in company with a little, decrepit, droopy-moustached soldier with a fixed bayonet. Zsiga Nagy knew the ropes, for he had been marketing several times. When we had finished at the other shops we went into the butcher's, but not through the proper entrance to the shop but by a back gate, through a little garden. We sat down at a little table in a glass-roofed

verandah. Soon the butcher himself appeared, in a blue-striped linen blouse and with a blood-stained apron covering his paunch. Zsiga Nagy asked him for wine. The butcher was not in the least taken aback, and told our escort to lean his rifle up in a corner and order something for himself. 'You're not an enemy of drink, *poilu*?' he asked with a grin. '*Eh bien, non . . .*' said the soldier, wiping his thin moustache as though it were already moist. Soon there came the clink of glasses and a pretty girl brought in a bottle of wine and the glasses on a covered tray. We began to feel very much at ease. The smell of flowers came in at the door of the verandah. The blonde, friendly-smiling girl bustled round us, and sometimes her apron touched our legs and it seemed it was that brought the scent. Mademoiselle Juliette had been to a commercial college and for the last two years had been keeping the accounts for her father. If the shop-bell rang she had to run to attend to it, and we only saw her again if we ordered something more. So we took to asking for the wine by the half-litre, and even then had to drink a great deal. Luckily the soldier went over to rum, and with our encouragement drank off glass after glass in quick time. In the end little Juliette came in laughing, for it was plain our mad drinking was only so that we could see her the more often. We did not say much to her. Indeed we could not, for if only a breath of our desires had reached her she must have broken and fallen like a little flower under the whirlwind.

It was already getting dark when we had to rouse ourselves from our fascination. There had been nothing said more than '*Mademoiselle, je vous prie*' and '*Oui, Monsieur,*' yet it seemed to us like a great amorous experience. Our escort was squinting horribly as he shouldered his rifle.

We climbed the hillside humming peacefully and softly to ourselves, as though we were not going back to the Citadel at all. The French soldier did not come along behind us but level with us, talking cheerfully the whole time. If someone had watched our peaceful walk in the gathering evening he

might have thought the miracle of St. Francis had been repeated of the sheep going with the wolf.

There was indeed something miraculous in the mood of that summer evening, for at the last cross-roads our escort suddenly stopped, threw down his rifle and declared we could do as we liked but he was not coming any further with us; he was not such a fool as to go back into that stinking Citadel on such a fine starry night when he knew of a place . . .

We had actually to force him not to leave us there, and it needed long entreaty before he could be persuaded to pick up his rifle again and go on with us, for it was his duty to watch over us and ours to be his prisoners. We only reached the Citadel with great difficulty, and had all our work cut out to prevent our guard from escaping.

And still something else happened before unrelieved darkness completely enveloped us in the Citadel's casemates. Towards the end of September there arrived a new German internee who turned out to be a dentist. He brought a primitive drill, instruments and drugs, and he opened a surgery in the sick-room. His name was Wolf. He had managed to be sent every six months to a different camp. There was work enough for him in Ile d'Yeu. The soldiers went to him as well, and some people from the island.

So it was that on the last day of summer there came to the Citadel Madame Germain, the young, wonderfully beautiful wife of one of the corporals. She stayed in the canteen till her turn came with Wolf. Not knowing anything of her arrival, I went to the canteen in the early afternoon and went up to Madame Boutineau, leaning out of her little window, to buy some trifle or other. The fat little woman retreated from the opening with a smile and told me to look into the room, for I would not repent it.

All among the piled tins and packets stood a young woman, dressed in mourning, and she smiled back at me when I stuck

my head in. She was beautiful, and as she stood leaning against a shelf every desirable line of her slender body showed clearly under the thin black dress. My peering face must have looked funny, for she laughed out loud and blushed and asked Madame Boutineau why she had made such an exhibition of her.

I too had reproaches for the canteen-proprietress: this was torture. But—‘Come in,’ called Madame Boutineau. ‘Show us you have some courage in you.’

I had enough courage to march firmly round through the soldiers to the canteen door, but, inside, the words suddenly stuck in my throat. She was the second and last woman during the whole of my internment to whom I came so burningly near. The first had been the shop-girl in Noirmoutier into whose blouse I had scarcely been able to stick those pins. Madame Boutineau’s cheerful banter soon bridged our confusion, and we drank a glass together and looked into each other’s eyes, and then I told her, though I stammered, she could not imagine how much delight and how much pain meeting her in that ghastly place meant for me.

Then someone came from the dentist for the woman in black; she gave me her hand again and with a mysterious look said ‘*Au revoir.*’

Later, when I was sitting in our little bastion garden with all the others of the Austro-Hungarian Committee, I realised what she meant by her farewell.

Up on the rampart, among staring prisoners, rose the figures of Madame Germain and the canteen-proprietress, just opposite us. It was in the evening. The canteen-proprietress said with a leer:

‘Madame Germain would like to see the hut from the inside.’

I did not hesitate. I jumped up onto the bastion wall, scrambled up the steep of the rampart and before the young woman could say yes or no picked her up and with a madman’s

agility ran down my breakneck path again and set her down in the middle of our sagely conferring parliament.

The canteen-proprietress laughed and clapped her hands. We stood round the woman, gaping, and only her breast heaved and her face flushed a little to betray her excitement. We looked at her with blinking avidity, as someone coming out of darkness blinks and stares at the sun. I think we desperately wanted to talk to her, click our heels together in our heavy clogs like any rustic gallant and say beautiful, very beautiful things to her. The young woman understood our confusion. She stood up, serious. Now she was a little ashamed of having been brought here only out of curiosity. Then she looked into our hut and went along the paths in our garden, gently, dreamily brushing the fading flowers with her white fingers.

On the bastion there was no one but myself and the eternally praying, live-dead Tutschek. Madame Germain saw his ghost-like face among the creepers, and shivered. As though she had only then realised where she was, she bent her beautiful head and whispered with paling lips:

‘How unhappy you are!’

We were roused from our speechlessness by two armed soldiers sent by the sergeant to take the reckless woman away immediately. They took Madame Germain between them. At the opening to the way down the woman in black turned once more her white, gleaming face, and waved good-bye.

As soon as she was gone our tongues were loosed. We competed in description of her. One saw her eyes as blue, another as brown. We quarrelled as to whether she was fair or dark. Our imaginations, which had so shrunk back from the living woman, now set to painting the beauties of her remembered, each for himself to keep.

CHAPTER XX

THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

IN the autumn and the early winter months of 1917 we were again plagued by the question of the ending of the War and of peace. Not that we had ever been able to free ourselves from such thoughts during our whole imprisonment. Our fate was so dependent on the War that forgetfulness of it could only be in a momentary, stolen exaltation or crazy fantasy or exhausting physical work ; but at any moment the foul, bloody waters of the War raging outside might break down those fragile barriers, and then there was no escape. No one stood by us; and everything, the dark, underground dwellings, the wretchedness of our companions, our officious guards, our mauled letters and pilfered parcels, every smallest sign emphasised that haunting horror which forced its way into our most secret parts, stole into our dreams, and against which we had ceaselessly to struggle.

Often it would have been better if it had been proclaimed and confirmed to us what in our great despair we so often thought—that it meant no difference to us anyway: for us the outer world had died, we should never return to it. Then we should at least have made up our minds to the worst. But life always held out hope. So we judged all news: did it mean complete life or complete death for us ?

In those months we at first were sure that peace was not far off. The spirit of protest was in the air. We heard of strikes in France and Austria-Hungary. Here and there signs of disintegration appeared in the French army, and in spite of the newspapers' secrecy we came to hear of it. The Socialists were preparing in Stockholm. At last

Benedict XV had delivered a speech directed at the combatant countries. From the newspapers we learnt of Sixtus' mission, from which it was obvious that Francis Joseph's successor wanted peace. From everywhere came news of change of Government. The Italians had exhausted themselves at the battle of Caporetto, and had apparently suffered a deadly blow. The Russian Empire was in complete dissolution, the Rumanian forces were annihilated, and it could be a question only of weeks before a German peace would be signed in which, though there would be not the faintest sign of a peaceful spirit, we saw famished Germany securing her mere immediate existence, only to manœuvre into a situation in which she could hold out for a worthier peace settlement. We thought the world was exhausted, as we were.

Then came dreadful disappointments one after the other. It was as if someone had proclaimed the motto of "On with Destruction." Every such word urging to fresh, desperate effort was like the hand of some dreadful phantom thrusting us back again into the black, sucking whirlpool just as we thought we were beginning to climb away from it. The French newspapers rang louder and louder with the slogan of savage determination—*jusqu'au bout*. They began writing again against the *défaitistes*. Everyone was a *défaitiste* who did not want to prolong the work of bloodshed and vengeance till Germany should ask for peace on her bended knees. The *jusqu'au bout*-ist spirit crushed all opposition. Clemenceau attacked Malvy. Then came the spying cases: Bolo put to death, Almeroyola driven to suicide, Turmel and Lenoir and Desouche arrested, Caillaux put in the dock. And Wilson was proclaiming that martyrdom was not to be France's privilege, as though the whole world was not passing through a great martyrdom.

What was happening in the outer world we could not see clearly from our casemates. To what extent the responsibility for the War's prolongation rested with the one side or the other, this man or that man, the historians will perhaps

one day decide. For ourselves we feared an extorted peace equally whether it was the Germans or the Entente that forced it. The two possibilities seemed equal now. And who was the obstacle to an agreement for peace we had no idea. We saw and felt only Clemenceau, the spirit of Clemenceau now at last in power, overthrowing one after another the splendid buildings of our expectant belief. Clemenceau may have been the genius of the "mailed fist" and of "great deeds." He may have had ideals for his country and that *bourgeois*, Capitalist Imperialism against which he had once, as a Communist, so furiously raged. Perhaps it was the feeling of deadly danger that hardened in him to a will to force victory even if it meant Europe bleeding to death. But we could form no such picture of him.

In our eyes the old man was the incarnation of blind hate and blood-lust, living heartless and soulless for his work of revenge and destruction. He became identified in our imaginations with the demoniac spirit of aimless slaughter. We often wondered, if he had still been a man in the full bloom of life, in the balanced possession of his mind and faculties, if he had still had anything to await from Nature and from men and from the passing of time, whether he would have upheld so resolutely the dark banner of death. Was it allowed to entrust with the unchecked control of millions of human lives an old wreck of a man for whom at the best life meant very little? Was he really a man, or the satanic essence of senility? So he came to throw his shadow on us, till in our uneasy nights we saw only him, kneeling with bony knees on our chests to strangle us with shrivelled, crooked fingers. It was the fixed hallucination of a near madness.

There came that ghastly night when for the first time I faced the monster of insanity, and the darkness of which never afterwards quite dispersed from about me: it too was in some

strange connection with that aged, remorseless dictator. In the evening we had talked long in No. 51. The cold, leaden, early December rain had poured down all day long, and we had scarcely been able to move about, so sleep came late. We sat round Dr. Herz' place; Soltész, Dudás, Németh, Schneider, little Moritz Stein, and, of course, Schuler. We talked in whispers so as not to disturb the others.

Again all our talk was of the continuation of the War and of Clemenceau and of men who were now still children being sacrificed if the bloodshed went on. Someone said it was no longer men who were making the War but that it was grinding on of itself like huge, man-crushing millstones run wild. Or revengeful ghost-hands were turning the stones, supernatural beings meddling in the affairs of lunatic mankind, as we had read of the meddling of gods in earthly strife in Homer and Virgil. We had smiled at it, then.

It was one o'clock in the morning when I slipped back to my place. My neighbour was Wolfner, the one-time fur merchant. Only the whiteness of his face shone palely in the darkness and the silver streaks of his long beard spread on the blanket. That he was beside me I knew more from his heavy breathing and groaning and moaning and the jumbled words he spoke in his sleep. He was always friendly and fatherly to me, for he was considerably older than I was. He used to prepare our combined supper, laying our table with great care and talking to me the whole time. By now I knew all about his home in Hungary. He had shown me photographs of his plump, bejewelled wife and of his two daughters. In his dreams he was always at home. If I listened I could follow him.

But nearly all the men were talking or crying out in their sleep. The casemate never quietened down even at night, especially after rainy days or at critical times of the War. The mattresses and gimcrack bedsteads creaked and rustled under restless tossings. There came sighs and groans and

long-drawn moanings. In the whole room there were not more than one or two who were snoring peacefully. Suddenly I heard Dudás call clearly from his window: 'Shoot where you see it shine. . . . That's his eye.' Then a thin, unnatural voice wailed in German, '*Das Leichentuch ist nicht genügend lang.*' One of the Stocker boys at a burial. Then at such loud cry everybody stirred, some sat up, someone looked for his clogs and coat.

Outside the wind had changed to a tearing gale. The shrieking and bellowing of it came in through the half-moon-shaped window; perhaps it could not get out of the surrounding moat, and the endless round only roused its strength and fury. On the waves of wind of that mad round the owls too were circling on the stretched rag-sails of their wings, shrieking hoarse, shrill shrieks of alarm as though they were afraid of colliding with one another.

I went to sleep. I felt I had been sleeping for a long time when suddenly I woke from a nightmare. The voices, the figures of the running children had vanished into the darkness that bore down on me in the casemate. For a moment I could not remember the dream, but felt only a gripping at my heart, and I groped round me in terror; for I felt I was losing consciousness and sinking into the darkness. At last the half-moon-shaped window, the groaning sleepers, the tearing storm all grew real. I felt then more and more surely round me and slowly became calmer, for the existence of those things was a proof of my consciousness. I reached up to my shelf to feel for tobacco, and my hand knocked against the 'cello hanging on the wall, and it answered my touch with a long boom. I stroked and felt the instrument: the wood was refreshingly cool, and I plucked each string softly and thought of sounds, soft, sighing half-sounds. I could not take my eyes and hands from it. I took it up and pressed it between my knees and wondered what would happen if I very slowly and gently played it. Should I go mad, or am I mad as it is? . . . I put the 'cello back in its place. But I thought it

would be good to play so that I might cry myself to peace. For my heart could not be so heavy when the weight of tears was out of it. Then I remembered mad old Uncle Sarkadi. He too had thrown his top-hat into the river to let out the thoughts that pressed on his head.

As the picture of Uncle Sarkadi, with his watery blue eyes and the old, silvery fluff of hair round his veined temples, rose before me, suddenly I remembered the dream. I was playing in a wood with the children of the school I had been at. There were little girls there too. They ran about and danced. I knew all their names, though I had never thought of them since the time when I was there. They danced with a strange, graceful sensuousness in their movements. Suddenly out of the wood, crawling on all fours, came mad old Uncle Sarkadi. His back was covered with brown, dried leaves, a branch had scratched his face till it bled, and in one upstretched hand he held a gleaming file and burnt and stabbed the children wherever he reached them. And when, shrieking and wailing, they were all stretched on the ground or had run away, only I remained, rooted to the spot. Then the monster came towards me. But it was not Uncle Sarkadi any more. His face had shrivelled, his skin had turned parchment-coloured, he was the Clemenceau-face. Then I was awake.

I turned my thoughts to other things. By then I had become practised in drugging my consciousness in sleepless nights. So I plunged into a long meditation on Kant and Bergson. I gave myself up all unsuspecting to my theorising, and had set off on a fine course of deductions when suddenly I woke to the fact that the last link in my theory had completely slipped out of my memory. I had completely forgotten what I had concluded a second before. The chain of thought was broken as though it had been a symbol of my consciousness and had been swallowed into the darkness.

Now that desperate, clutching fear with which I had woken from my dream took me again with fresh strength. What

was the matter with me? The first fear had come from the weight of the nightmare. But now I had been arguing soberly and quietly, playing with thought-building as I had so often done, and all of a sudden the whole thing had collapsed. And try as I might I could not retrace a single thought. I was terribly frightened. The blood rushed to my head, and as though I were in an infinity of dark waters I grabbed desperately at my straw mattress and at the things round me. If I could not flee from it, madness would overwhelm me.

A moment later I hurried on my clothes and ran out into the yard. The rain had stopped, but the gale was raging, tearing the ragged clouds across the sky. Above the silent earth the sky stretched in a living, heaving whirl, and from far away came the booming uproar of the lashed sea's onslaught on the cliffs. I stared at the moon peeping out from between the clouds and looking down at me like a huge eye protruding from its socket. There was only its intangible, disquieting disc gleaming there, growing bigger and bigger, soaring nearer and nearer and more imminent till I turned my eyes away, for I feared I would grow faint of it. A silvery cloud stood out billowing against the depth of the dark-blue sky. At first it was like a bust of Rodin's of an old man. On the thin neck with the taut, protruding muscles rested a big, tousled head; the beard was already pierced by the sky's blue, till the last grey threads dissolved into it. The figure was never still for an instant. The neck grew horribly, grew till at last the head was quite separate and rolled across the sky like a gleaming cannon-ball. Then, just in the middle, the ball began to dissolve, and with unexpected swiftness that frightening, senile head was dispersed and in its stead there rose a lyre between the arms of which there blinked a tiny, distant star.

It was all an emphasis of strange, sudden, irrevocable change. Nothing stood, everything had fallen into the curve of change, into a curved line of which no one may know from where it comes and whither it goes. Sometimes the wind

struck down into the yard, stirred up the puddles, whirled bits of paper into a mad dance, set stones rolling and blew up into the shirts hung out to dry till their arms stretched and their chests inflated as though a body had suddenly come to life inside them.

There was no guessing, then, what was going to become of the world, what the changing times would bring. Where would the clouds stop? The sea would break in on us, and the island and the whole world would sink into the water. Only the sky knew, knew something, standing out sometimes clear above the rolling clouds, looking down at me so nearly and communicatively, as though it were just about to speak and proclaim all the secrets of Nature.

I was afraid of that meeting. I knew it was only temptation. The secrets were calling, beckoning. Now it seemed everything was to be solved, the dividing walls between Man and Nature would fall down and the face of God would show clear from behind the clouds. How simple smiling infinity seems. It is reaching down for me, grasps me, swings me up into itself as the gale bore off the bits of paper. But where shall I be then? On to what road of insanity would the wind of infinity cast me down if it grew tired of playing with me and let me fall?

I think Nature has never been so near to me, and I have never fled from it in such panic fear as then. I did not dare look back at the clouds and the temptation of the sky; I did not dare listen to the pounding of the waves, I only looked at the mud in the yard and the black, gleaming pools of water. For hours on end I ran up and down in front of the casemates, deadly tired, to hammer into my consciousness the fact of imprisonment, to cling to the noisome present, the horror of reality which, like the last wretched fragment of a splendid ship, alone could bring my life safe to a certain shore.

I did not want the gamble of Nature's secrets any more, nor the rush of thought nor the snares of imagination, I only wanted my own miserable life, and all I knew when I col-

lapsed on to my mattress was that if the next morning they really brought in the thin, bitter coffee, I would break out weeping for happiness.

When a man has lost everything, and his life hangs by no more than a hair, he watches over it with an aching anxiety that he never had for the riches of his former life. I had nothing left but the empty, beastly inaction of my fourth year in imprisonment—the mattress in the casemate, the daily turnips, the ever-dwindling bread ration—yet I clung to it with a wild, instinctive stubbornness, watched over it restlessly that my consciousness should not slip from it, for if once it left that fragment nothing else could follow but an endless, dark wandering in madness.

On the morning after that night, and every morning after it, I got up glad only to hear the bugle, glad of the thin coffee and the watery, tasteless vegetables, glad to see the soldiers' bayonets, and if in those heavily passing hours and days I felt consciousness again trying to leave me I ran out into the yard, trod out the counted steps of my walk, shut my eyes, ears, spirit to the vertigo of temptation, and blind and deaf and thoughtless ran and ran till I had left the haunting behind me and nothing was left but the life of a prisoner. I could not read any more, for I was afraid of memories and dreamings. It was always a dangerous bridge on which the imagination slipped across to frightening paths. There only remained the cold water, the walks, the talk and the cards and the chess and the meals and sometimes the beastly unconsciousness of drink. And even then it often happened that I would spring up in the middle of cards or talking and have to run out into the yard because I thought I was going mad.

Now I understood Riedl, who always ran and ran. He had in the end attained his object. Last October he had been sent to Budapest, where he knew no one and where he would have to learn Hungarian all over again. I had given

him a letter of introduction to a friend, and had nailed into his thick-soled shoes two short stories for a certain review in Budapest. Riedl had called on my friend once, and then had never put in a second appearance, though he had promised he would take my little parcel out of his shoes. Weeks afterwards my friend went to inquire for him at the tenement where the one-time *maître d'hôtel* had found lodging. He was told that three days after his arrival Riedl had died. They had buried him in the clothes and the shoes that he had on.

The number of serious nerve cases increased in that fourth winter. Two Germans went raving mad. They were taken to a French lunatic asylum, and there they died. The other cases were only wrecks, but apparently there was enough life in them to prevent them being sent home.

Tutschek was long past all nervousness and restlessness. He had never come to himself again, nor ever did. If he heard his own name he used to say he had known someone of that name, but that was a long time ago. Sometimes there came black-bordered letters from his wife. He never opened them, but collected them in a pile. He said he would one day give them to the man to whom they were addressed. He still did nothing but kneel and pray. He had so lost the habit of walking that he could not take a couple of steps without his knees giving under him.

An oldish Austrian house-painter, called Heipel, turned just so quietly mad. He lived in No. 54. He used to collect every rag and rubbish possible on his mattress and in his trunk. He had arrived in imprisonment with hair and moustache still dyed black, but now the dye had thinned and his shaggy hair and moustache had grown and turned an awe-inspiring shade of green. He used to spend all day painting pictures of the Citadel which he would sell for a couple of sous to the soldiers and the other men. Later, when he ran out of customers and paper, he painted his prison-pictures on bits of rag, on the benches in the casemates, on the wall,

on the paving-stones, everywhere, and it seemed no space was enough for him to realise his gloomy vision. The green-haired old painter never washed and did not change his linen for months on end, with the result that he was ridden with lice and gave off an intolerable stench. To this had to be added the awful smell of the filthy rags and rotting objects collected on his mattress, on his shelf and in his trunk, making the air unbearable for a yard or two round him. Since no one could persuade him to keep clean and he would on no account be separated from his noisome possessions, he was at last reported to the Administrator. Then the poor old man was forcibly bathed, struggling and whimpering like a child, put into a fresh shirt and pants from the Red Cross stores, and then his collection of rags and his trunk were dumped out in the yard for him to choose out anything that was still usable. He stood weeping beside his outcast treasures. He stayed there for hours, holding one or two things in his hand. The choice was difficult, almost impossible. He simply could not tear himself away from anything; all that stinking jumble had become as much a part of his life as of others a house, a car and comfortable furniture. In the end we persuaded him with great difficulty to come away at least for a little. We told him we would make an inventory of everything, pack it all up carefully and store the whole thing with the Administration till the day of his release.

Besides Heipel, one who seemed a hopeless case and who gave nearly as much trouble was red-haired Rosenberg, who was seized by such violent persecution-mania that he refused to eat even out of the can which he always carried about with him. Generally he had to be fed forcibly, or the cunningest ways had to be found of inducing him to take the food of his own accord.

Katz, the sullen, taciturn old tanner, was taken by a queer mania, for he suddenly started rat-hunting, and was blissfully happy if he succeeded in skinning one or two rats. He used

to creep about all day near the kitchen, and if he saw the dog carrying a rat he would swoop down on it like a hawk and snatch the rat away. The kitchen-men seized the opportunity his name offered and nicknamed him "Katze." There would often be a tremendous hubbub and running about in the yard all on account of Katz' strange passion. The old tanner would have grabbed a rat and set off at a run. The dog would rush barking after him. At that the kitchen-men set up a shouting and in no time the whole yard would be resounding with "Katze, Katze, Katze. . . ." The old tanner, clutching the rat in one hand, would disappear down one or other of the underground passages, and then, once alone in his corner, set to work on the animal with his pocket-knife. . . . He had quite a number of prepared rat-skins of which he took the greatest care, hiding them in places where no one should find them.

But a still more astonishing form of madness appeared in a certain big-bearded, very proper-looking German called Klopfer. This gentleman had enjoyed the greatest respect among the other men for four years. His name was never pronounced without the prefatory "Herr." Herr Klopfer might have become a member of the Committee, his bearing almost marking him out for it, but he never accepted any such worthless distinction. He lived among us like an exiled monarch. He walked always alone, his hands behind his back, with large and dignified strides. His curly, chestnut-brown beard, which Wachsmann used to singe with a quite especial lovingness, spread out over his carefully brushed overcoat like a strange fur bib; he wore a bowler hat and eye-glasses hanging on a golden chain. No one knew exactly who he was, but everyone respected him highly. Then suddenly in the last months of 1917 his behaviour changed. The bearded authority began to honour his fellow-prisoners with his addresses. He would beckon a man aside with an important, elegant gesture, and when they were alone he would offer some strange, lewd object for sale, a perfectly

simple article which one had to hold between the thumb and first finger, when an obscene object resulted. At first everyone received the offer in blank amazement, but later they grew accustomed to what it meant if Herr Klopfer called you aside. The elegant, bearded gentleman had a great number of pornographic papers as well, which he also sold. His big trunk was an inexhaustible store of erotically conceived wares. In the end we were driven to conclude that Herr Klopfer was no amateur collector of such things but had lived from their sale in peace-time. Some men even thought they remembered him from the night-traffic of the Boulevard des Italiens. Perhaps he had begun as an erotic cicerone, a top-hatted, living, street-corner advertisement indicating with a statuesque arm some suspicious-looking establishment in a side-street. Then he had risen to be a gentleman, Herr Klopfer, and perhaps had meant in imprisonment to put on a new life and a new countenance. And in the end the long confinement and lack of money had thrown him back and down again to where he had begun life.

Herr Klopfer was only one of several, an exaggerated instance of us all. I only realised this when my own nervous fears appeared. Then I understood that every one of us was a little undermined. The first man with whom I talked about it was Schneider, the pale-faced baker from Pozsony. He told me the fear of madness had first come to him when he was bugling. He had suddenly forgotten the call he had played scores and scores of times. The bugle choked in a queer, unmeaning squeak. Those who had heard it had laughed at him; but the Pozsony baker had gone even paler. Afterwards I learnt from him that Kilar, his partner in the coffee-stall business, was just such a cold-water curist as Neubert or Neuhaus. I talked to Nagel and Däumling about those terrifying failures of memory, and discovered that the two Germans had been doing memory exercises regularly for the last year.

They warned me against drink. It only gave momentary

forgetfulness, and then the worn nerves the more easily fell prey to crazy fantasies. We had a ghastly example of it in Varvey, the one-time Bordeaux teacher: now he could not give his English lessons even in the morning: he talked nonsense, his brain was permanently fuddled and he could never remember what he was talking about. By the afternoon he was quite drunk. With his dwindled income he could only afford rum, and on that he got drunk in a few minutes. Every day towards dusk he was to be seen in front of one of the ways up to the rampart, sitting on the ground, his eyes bulging and bloodshot, his mouth open and the saliva dribbling from it. Sometimes he would be holding a little medallion in his hand with the photograph of his daughter in it. He would look at it, and then without cause he would begin to laugh, a horrible, bestial laugh. Drunken squabbles and fights were now everyday affairs. The guard no longer bothered with prisoners who came staggering out of the canteen; only if a drunk fell against one of the soldiers, then they kicked him. Once several men, their faces all bloody, were lying in front of the entrance gateway, flat on the ground, for several hours.

We too, if we drank, did things for which we would not have liked to take the responsibility the next day. Once when the guard was driving three of us in from a nocturnal walk we grappled with them, grabbing at their bayonets with our bare hands. They saw we were drunk and did us no harm. We had been invited that night by the canteen-proprietress to take a glass in her company. Even her husband seemed to be in a good humour. He had long been forbidden alcohol, but he still drank in secret, and there was a strong whiff of *apéritif* coming from him that evening. We stayed till late in the evening and then left, slightly drunk. Our clash with the guard sobered us somewhat, but not completely, for I was still feeling the effects of the drink the next day when I woke up to hear them telling excitedly in No. 51 that the canteen-proprietor had died suddenly in the

night. He had only cried out in his sleep and then died. I listened half-awake, and for a few moments thought it was about myself; as though I had died and the others were talking about me.

After that I even less often touched wine; I had no liking for it, anyway. Dudás drank considerably. He was no alcoholic, but he already behaved consistently when he was drunk, being assailed always by the same fixed ideas. It might eventually have become dangerous for him if he had not struggled with all his strength against the temptation. One of his constant drunken imaginations was that his young German friends had stolen the plans of his aeroplane. When he was drunk he would talk about this for hours on end, and it was quite impossible to persuade him that he was talking nonsense. He had some stories, too, about Dr. Herz and others which he generally only told when he was under the influence of alcohol. He would spend the evening telling these at length to everyone, and then the next day he would spend the morning talking to those with whom he had quarrelled when he was drunk and apologising and making up for everything. His struggle was pathetic. He still had fight in him, though by that time he had had many troubles. His money had run out, he was receiving nothing but bad news from home and he kept himself simply by selling the things out of his trunk. Nearly everything was bought by the Administrator. One morning Biesenbach and Von der Hohe took up the "coffin" itself to the Administration. There was indeed a lot buried in it: Dudás' one-time prosperity, luxury, carelessness and in all probability his youth as well, for ever.

The always increasing restlessness and nervous depression of everyone changed even the look of the yard completely. Till then no one was ever to be seen outside in rainy weather. Now in the yard and on the rampart there were always mute, hurrying walkers tramping their way with hands in their pockets and coat-collars turned up, in wind or rain

indifferently. They did not notice anything or anybody round them. Their frightened gaze was turned inwards. . . .

"Handsome Karl" won great popularity at that time. At first they had laughed at him and jeered when he had preached nourishment by roots and had organised half-naked runs round the yard. Now he had many followers. The number of runners with the barefooted, curly-headed, mad Apollo running at their head grew from day to day. One day there were only ten or twenty running, the next day they had grown to forty. Ever fresh arrivals joined the ceaselessly moving, tireless circle. The yard would have been scarcely conceivable without that crazy circling. They ran in the morning, they ran at noon, and often they ran from the afternoon till late in the night, and then the round was in ghastly fashion duplicated: the owls outside in the moat, and the prisoners inside in the yard. In that ceaseless, dizzy running round and round everything could be forgotten. All the dreaded fantasies and devils of torment held aloof from the circle, and when they at length swooped down on their victim as he fell out of the ring they found only a dead-weary man over whom they could no longer triumph.

In the end the guard took to stopping the nocturnal running. The Administrator and the sergeants used to return to the fort about midnight, and that terrible, monotonous clumping of the clogs disturbed their sleep. Then we retreated into the underground passages. Eighty or a hundred of us would be standing along the length of the long, wet, dark wall. We were not allowed to talk, but we did not much want to. Only cigarettes glowed in the darkness and sometimes the face of one of us flushed in their glow. But we had no need of that to know each other. Usually we old Noirmoutier men used to stand together: old Müller, Jacob, Bistrán, Valery, Ványi, Szöke, Dudás . . . some of the Austrian waiters, the Stockers, the Tirolese gypsies . . . now all grey figures in their coarse Red Cross uniforms with the metal buttons, and caps. Uniform, colourless, speechless shadows

which could so easily melt into the darkness of the passage. Sometimes one of us said something. He did not talk, only dropped a word or two like a fragment of some long, subconscious image-series: peasant-girl—strawberry—mill—milk—street: and then we would ponder over it for a long time. It was no proper thinking, we were too tired for that. But there was a tremendous deal in such a word: pictures and sounds and colours and smells.

I do not know what was so good in standing there; but at such times we did not feel the lack of anything. We could have stayed like that for a long time, for years, for ever.

So passed the fourth winter. The days again lengthened, we lived again from hour to hour as in the beginning. Only now we waited for no great change; indeed, we feared it.

I had had no news from home for months, and even at that I was unastonished. Friends and family were like a quite tiny point in the distance, which, if it disappeared, could cause me no pain.

Yet there came once a letter from a woman whom I had once known and who had not written to me for years, and in that letter came the memory of her as vividly as if it had been yesterday that I had torn myself from her arms. I looked at myself wonderingly in the reflection of her hot words, and the veil of grey days was suddenly loosed from me like a shroud from a dead man resurrected. I wanted to laugh and sing. And I went up to the walk on the rampart as long before, when some exalting experience drove me to walk. Up there the mist was rising steamily from the wood's wet trees and last year's dried grass was raising its head, and I stood holding the letter as if it were a precious rose, trembling.

That year Christmas brought no surprises. We were afraid of Christmas and Christmas memories. My ex-pupils' collection arrived the day after Christmas, so we arranged a New Year supper in the canteen. It was cold and bare, and Madame Boutineau sat with us dressed in black, and beside her her little daughter, Marie. Everything went quite other-

wise than it had those times at Noirmoutier. We organised a great cabaret performance in the dining-room after the supper. Our scene-shifters decorated the stage all over with pine branches. Willersdorfer painted fresh scenery. The orchestra learned some new pieces. Above the stage Edward picked out the date 1918 in coloured glass marbles. The four figures were lit up in the national colours of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Turkey. Rudi Engelsdorfer excelled himself one last time. He arranged a buffet in the first room of the "dining-room," set up little tables where the Austrian waiters, arrayed in their jealously guarded dinner-jackets and tails, served refreshments. Dr. Herz gave two perfect performances. Heger did his clowneries and Bismarck did a cowboy act. The "woman" celebrities of the Citadel appeared in a little operetta: Varvey's blond apprentice watchmaker, George, the little German waiter, Dr. Herz as a *prima donna*, and the woman impersonator Grünfeld, who sang soprano arias to his own guitar accompaniment.

The arrangement of everything was almost too perfect. There was dancing in the buffet after the performance, when, with the exception of Grünfeld, all the female performers kept their costumes, long hair and make-up on till the end. Count B——, in tails and a white waistcoat, danced with Dr. Herz. The blond Baron made conversation with the little German waiter, whose long black plaits were ornamented with a blue bow. Blond, scented George had a perfect court. The watchmaker's apprentice was falling indiscriminately into everybody's arms, for his jealous friend the ex-teacher was lying dead-drunk in one of the underground passages. The waiters went round with refreshments and cakes. Dancing was going on in both rooms. Once or twice I was seized by the same oppressive feeling as on that critical night when I had watched the torn careerings of those great clouds. Here, too, an impossible show of change was going on before me. What if all this that whirled and spun here in the wind of madness should remain so for ever?

These ghastly apparitions in their gaudy rags be our women, that damp, vaulted cellar a ballroom and real, unchanging life that ghoulis vision that twirled before my eyes?

At midnight Schneider stood in the opening between the two cellars and blew a blast on his bugle. The dance stopped, everyone ran to get a glass, and as we stood up to greet the New Year the wall of scenery shook in the rush and confusion, swayed forward, and the glass decoration fixed on its top, with the year 1918 glittering in coloured lights, smashed to splinters on the ground.

CHAPTER XXI

PARIAHS' REVOLT

THE spring brought nothing. We stared gloomily back at the cheerful sunlight, fresh grass and trees. The face of the world was changed. It was as though the splendid back-cloth of Nature had torn, and one could not know when it would disappear and a dreadful nightmare picture glare out at us from behind the gaping canvas.

We sowed seeds, mechanically, out of mere habit, dug and arranged the weed-grown bastion yard. The German gymnast set up his gypsy tent again, and I built myself a hut just big enough for me and my books to fit into. I thought solitude would help my nervous depression. When I had quite finished the thing I realised I could not stand reading, working or thinking any more, and that a more terrible din and screaming disturbed my solitude than if I had been in the noisiest casemate of them all. I had even arranged my hut so as to be able to slip out to it in sleepless nights and read by candle-light. One night I tried. I slipped from tree to tree along the bottom of the rampart, low in the grass to escape being seen by the sentries. Then a long stumble along the endless, dark passage, finally to climb out of the hole in the wall. Once up there I drew breath and looked about me. The stars were twinkling in the sky, beyond the wall the pine-trunks rose bluely iridescent; everything was still, but the silence was secretive and hostile as though it had begun just at the moment when I stepped out onto the bastion yard. An owl was keeping watch on the roof of my hut. Its outline was sharp-cut against the background of glowing sky. It did not move. It sat there staring at me

like something or someone watching over no mere new-built hut but the ruins of a world. Then I knew I might assail it in vain with the thickest of bludgeons, it would never fly away from there. The place belonged to it, and in a rush of pain I drew back from the frame of the entrance, to go back along the endless, dark passage.

Tutschek could not be moved out of the casemate, though we had put his hut in order for him. He would not walk, and if we picked him up he set up a terrible screaming.

In his stead Bismarck presented himself as the new tenant, one evening towards the end of March. His knickerbockers were gone by now, and he wore blue workman's trousers, and of his old healthy complexion there was only one little spot left now on his prominent cheek-bones. But his good, white teeth still shone when he laughed, and he still laughed in scorn or in confidence.

Bismarck needed Tutschek's hut so as to be able to hang up his enormous map of the eight-hundred-kilometre long French front. Up till now he had spent all day sitting in front of the map, and had faithfully marked out every movement of the War from the great German offensive in Picardy which began on the 21st of March till the last desperate attack at Chalons. Now the map all speckled with marks of slaughter took possession of Tutschek's prayer-hut.

Bismarck knew all about everything: he never missed the faintest hint in the daily reports. Sometimes from his hut there would come loud, mad laughter rising to a shrill, fanatical cackle. At such times he would be marking out the day's reports on his map, and had for sure discovered that the Germans had made an advance at some point which meant the separation of the French and English armies and the turning of the English wing.

Sometimes with great secrecy he took me in with him to see his map and demonstrate the positions of the German and French forces on the two sides of that endless, winding valley of death from the North Sea right down to Switzerland.

He had marked in red ink the winding precipices where sometimes daily hundreds of thousands died for mad war-slogans which now only existed for themselves. The thick, black caterpillars represented the armies. Huge arrows zig-zagged through between towns and hills and rivers. These were Bismarck's signs for the directions and results of the German offensives—the road of a terrible tempest, where the freed demon of destruction had rushed, ripping the sky, tearing up the ground, destroying all life round it and deafening the world with its hellish bellowings.

That little, emaciated, cranky Prussian commercial traveller would sketch out the movements of a million of living, suffering, hope- and love-thirsty men with the unmoved, calculating absorption in the devilish business, the soulless, dogmatic positiveness of a field-marshal. Like a general, he did not see the men, only the theory. The lives of millions were in his hands nothing more than a paintbrush with which to make his map. As Foch had said, "The army is in the commander-in-chief's hand what the sword is in the soldier's." With his paintbrush-sword Bismarck fiddled and worked for months, pushing the black columns about, broadening the red death-valley once to Montdidier, or again to Ypres, then to Château-Thierry.

All the time he was receiving secret letters from home, hidden in clothes, food, cigars, all giving him details and home echoes of the last great four-month German effort. He used to read out his Kaiser's amazing flowers of speech about demanding peace with a mailed fist, and of the Crown Prince—"the Easter bells are ringing now for peace."

Easter was long past when Bismarck received that message, but he and the rest of the Germans, or a great part of them, lent blind faith to the phrase and set to expecting every moment the final, releasing victory of Germany.

There was something in the air. None of us could help feeling an inexplicable tension. It was the excitement of the first months all over again. Then even we in prison

began to have almost direct evidence of great doings. Madame Boutineau told us of great numbers of refugees from Paris on the island, their nerves not being able to stand the bombardment by German aeroplanes and the secret monster gun.

Summer came, and no decisive change had occurred. The Germans were at the Marne again, just as Von Kluck had been at the beginning of the war. Bismarck's map was now fairly covered with the huge black arrows pointing at Calais, Amiens, Paris, Reims. Now even Bismarck declined to state any positive objective, but took refuge in the generality that the aim of the German offensive was to annihilate the Allied forces. The French were apparently standing up to the German waves. Clemenceau's maniac voice shouted down all qualms: "*La guerre, rien que la guerre.*" And one day there came news from the little harbour town that American and English soldiers were occupying the island as well as the whole French coast.

We could see American ships now nearly every day, far out at sea, as though the Germans had nothing more to say in the matter. Something was preparing, and we could not see its outcome, and we were afraid. We were sure it would not take very long to break the German armies, and meanwhile the slaughter went on. There was no peace now conceivable which could pay for the mad destruction of life and property. Perhaps one day the guns would stop: but then who would be the man could set up the balance of responsibilities and crimes and sacrifice and martyrdom, and point to a future and a goal which, if it could not compensate for the ghastly butchery, could at least make us forget them? Till now release had always floated before us like a coming to a sunlit countryside. Now the vision was gone, and there was only vague darkness in its place.

At the beginning of the summer there came to the island a committee of important French and Swiss medical officers. It was the first time we had been visited by a medical com-

mittee. 'Till then the local doctors who visited the camp had sent one or two of the men before the permanent Commission at Lyons, though in most cases when it was already too late. Only Bárczy and the banker's son from Budapest had succeeded in getting through, and they were now in Switzerland and writing us letters full of details of their enviable situation. It seemed to us as though all the humanity and brotherly love in blood-soaked Europe had fled to that little country's mountains.

At any other time the arrival of such a committee, with our lives or deaths at their disposal, would have created tremendous excitement. Now we watched the doctors arriving in complete apathy. They went up the steep stone steps leading to the upper rooms of the Administration, and we went about our business. The Citadel doctor and Kohler had chosen altogether three of the men as fit to appear before the committee. They were all three sent straight off to Germany. That only took a couple of minutes, and the committee waited to see if anybody else was coming. The Citadel doctor reported that there were no more cases. The lunatics, the half-lunatics, the bad nerve cases, the rheumatic and the digestive cases could apparently wait. It was difficult to draw the line with all these "illnesses."

But the Swiss president of the committee finally expressed the wish that anybody who wanted to report himself should be admitted. So it had to be announced that anybody could go before the committee who felt ill. Even that decree was not received with much excitement. We might be interned in Switzerland, but what after that?

About eighty of us went before the doctors, and of those they found forty so ill that fourteen of them they sent not even to Switzerland but straight home, and the rest to Swiss sick-camps. I reported among the rest. I stood half-naked and shivering in front of the tall, handsome president of the committee, and his brown eyes looked searchingly at me for a moment. Only then I began to feel some excitement, and

my heart began to thump furiously. The doctor's eyes were kind, like eyes before the War.

'What is the matter?' he asked.

'Nerves.'

'Put your hands out in front of you, not stiffly.'

My hands went out to him with slack, trembling fingers, like a wordless entreaty.

The Swiss military doctor smiled hardly perceptibly, kindly.

'What are you?'

'A schoolmaster.'

'*Pour la Suisse*,' he said quite softly, so that only I should hear.

Then he turned to the clerk and there too dictated, "Switzerland." But that I did not hear, could only guess, for they did not let us know their decision. Nor was I thinking of that as I came out of the Administration and went down the long stone steps, for at last, after four years, I had met with a man who was over me and who looked kindly on me.

I did not dare think much of Switzerland during the summer months. My imagination always stopped at the frontier of the promised land. In spite of all reassurances I was afraid of never getting there. But it was easier to hold on if sometimes I said the name to myself, whispering.

Things grew worse as the autumn came nearer. We were taken out once to the old, ruined robbers' castle on the shore: I climbed up to the top of it, and then for the first time found myself gasping terribly for air, and the rocks and the sea and the sky swam before my eyes, so that I had to be helped down. I could not even bathe any more, though that summer we were several times allowed to bathe under guard. The first time I grew dizzy, and nearly drowned in water up to my waist.

After that I stayed in the Citadel and never went out for the parcels or bread. Though in the summer I needed the walks and the running and the sluicing with cold water, for there was no peace even under the climbing, scented nasturtiums of my hut. Nor was all well in the Citadel. The provision of the island with food had become more and more difficult. Sometimes the boat did not come for days on end, and then we got no bread. The usual food became unbearable; every day, noon and evening, turnips with a few beans. So it had been for months. There was no tobacco. Nearly everybody was by now forced back onto chewing rags or onto cigarettes made out of the dried leaves of the unfortunate nasturtium.

No letters, no parcels and no money came from home. Sometimes men who had earned and saved in prison would come to our help. Jacob Vantur turned into a positive banker, giving small loans to Dudás, Rubin and myself. We accepted gratefully if Kilar or Schneider invited us to coffee. Once Bajusz and Ambrus invited me to lunch in the little hut they had built themselves on the even-numbered casemates side. Valery, Ványi and Sztanscik were there too. We had stew and Hungarian sweets to follow. I remembered that meal for weeks.

One day in September came the news that the parcels from the Budapest Red Cross had arrived for the Hungarians among us. This was the answer to the list that I had drawn up a year before. The arrival of the packing-cases was awaited in tense excitement. The guard had to be turned out when Kaiser's party brought them in, for not only the Hungarians but the rest of the prisoners as well were barring the way to Kohler's room. We needed everything badly, clothes, books, food, tobacco. Besides that, the little cases brought a message from Budapest. It could not be as bad as all that at home if they could send parcels to everybody.

Then we opened the first case. The men bent over it expectantly, and found—some ragged shirts, a few worn-out

half-pairs of shoes, a dirty, wine-stained white waistcoat and other things of the same useless sort.

There was a blaze of indignation. The men threw the things away as they went out of the room. Something devilish had happened. It seemed some cruel hands had exchanged all our presents from home for the contents of a dustbin. And there could be no question of theft or interference. The parcels had arrived in perfect condition, and sealed.

The Hungarians cursed, the others wagged their heads, and the French soldiers grinned sardonically.

The men let even that pass, as they had to. They also may have guessed a cruel truth. Everybody now took away his packet under his arm, without speaking, and those who had thrown the stuff away collected it up and took it off. The Germans and Austrians gradually drifted away from us, and the French soldiers went back to their quarters: the last men to take their parcels left Kohler's room as though they were leaving a house of mourning.

The general dissatisfaction about the food was especially aggravated by the maimed Administrator gradually cutting down the bread ration. We were coming to realise that that conceited, hot-tempered little man was fattening on our misery. He had taken to buying the internees' most valuable effects at knock-down prices. It was in this way that he became possessed of Dudás' wrist-watch, typewriter, silver cigarette-case, and finally the big travelling-trunk. By then he had the wherewithal to fill it. He had six suits made him by Zsiga Nagy, and some of the other men had made him his fine under-linen.

We had been at war with him about the bread affair for weeks. He used to listen distantly to the Committee's complaints and then dismiss them without having made any definite promise. Every man ought to have got 180 grams

(c. 7 oz.) of bread a day. That now was desperately important, for we had been kept alive for months more or less by nothing but the bread. We felt keenly the lack of even five grams. But by carefully weighing the rations distributed we found that the Administrator was appropriating every time at least twenty or thirty grams of every ration. Under this regime everybody without exception had finished off his whole day's ration, which was given out in one lump, in the first hour after its distribution, and for the rest of the day could go hungry.

The bread was handed out to the *chefs de cuisine* every afternoon at five o'clock, under Kohler's supervision. One ration was scarcely bigger than what a man might consume to a normal meal. Perhaps we should not have complained of the quantity of it if the food had otherwise been tolerable. But there was no satisfying our hunger with the daily, tasteless, saltless turnip. In comparison with that fare bread meant the whole rich gamut of gastronomic pleasure. There was the tasty chewableness of meat in it, the fine nuances of pastry and fruit. The only trouble was that our stomachs, wearied of the eternal mess of turnips, disposed of that scrap of human nourishment in a few moments, and then for twenty-four hours we were ceaselessly tormented by the desire for food.

One day at the end of September the bread ration was forty grams (c. $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz.) short! That opened a ghastly perspective. If things went on like that, it meant death for us.

That evening in No. 51 there was a great commotion of prisoners in front of Schneider and Co.'s coffee-stall. From my mattress I could only see the ceaselessly moving legs and hear the angry outbursts in the buzz of talk. Some were talking about the committee, how it had again gone up to the Administrator and protested energetically against the bread-docking.

'*Ihr seid ja Schweinkerle!*' came a hoarse voice. It was

Markus, the skittles champion, who ever since his brothers had died in the Picardy offensive was ready for anything. '*Schlag tot das Schwein!*'

At that, the voice of mutiny, the noise died down a little. Men looked towards the door; Kilar, whiter than ever, asked for silence; the room-president appeared and invited the coffee-drinkers to scatter, as it was lights-out time.

The discussion was continued, though, in muffled tones. It was impossible to hear what they had decided, but when the bugle sounded they went out of the room in a close mass like men who have reached some conclusion.

I woke early next morning, after a half-sleepless night. The bread campaign had gone clean out of my head. Out in the yard a light mist was dissolving, the first breath of autumn. I set off walking round the yard, where as yet there were only very few men about. In front of one of the tunnels lay Varvey, drunk, spread-eagled flat on his stomach. The dust was slowly soaking up a big puddle in front of his gaping mouth. The fatigue men of the day came out of the casemates carrying their big buckets, and headed for the kitchen for the morning coffee. Three blond German seamen in tattered shirts were pulling down the shafts of the tilted water-cart. In the recess of the yard Jacob Vantur was watering his skittle-alley. Past the silent, open-doored casemates "Handsome Karl" and Edward the glass-blower were stolidly running with doubled fists. The two old enemies were a queer sight, panting reconciled along behind one another—the handsome, half-naked Greek god and the shabby, toothless, misshapen little gnome.

The red, tin-roofed Administration building rose proudly against the vivid blue background. Steep stone stairs led up from two sides to where the Administrator reigned in majesty. The windows of the office were open, but the potentate was not yet there. Under the archway of the gate a couple of sleepy sentries were lounging. I was just going to turn back into the casemate when an unusual erection

caught my eye opposite the Administration building. Three long tables had been stood on their ends in a row, and on them was painted in yard-high letters: 'NOUS RÉCLAMONS LE PAIN DÛ.'

That was meant for the Administrator. Apparently the malcontents of yesterday had made the notice during the night and stuck it up opposite the office so that it would be the first thing the Administrator should see in the morning. The soldiers had seen the enormous notice-board, but had not touched it. It had nothing to do with them, and moreover they did not approve of the Administrator making his profits out of the prisoners' bread. I began thinking with apprehension of all the prying and searching and punishment which would follow that most natural of claims.

I was just going to leave the scene of the crime when someone moved behind me. I looked round quickly. Under the shirts hung out to dry was squatting old, mad Heipel, painting on a bit of brown cardboard held in his lap.

'Well, Heipel, what are you doing out here so early in the morning?'

Heipel was always very polite. He got up, arranged his dirty, paint-bedaubed trousers, and answered in his thin, rather wailing voice:

'I am painting the Citadel with that notice in it.'

He had found fresh inspiration within the fort.

I asked him if he knew what was written on the notice-board in the shadow of which he was so peacefully painting. The green-haired, rather scared old man answered that he could not speak French. I explained what the mysterious writing meant. Heipel went very pale.

'Now look here, old fellow. It would be just as well if you got out of here. They'll suspect even you of having smeared that thing up there.'

Heipel grabbed at his head in a panic. The next moment he had collected up his rubbish and set off running with comical haste towards the Citadel. For quite a long time,

from further and further away, I heard his despairful whining: 'Oh, mein Gott! Oh, mein Gott!'

Towards nine o'clock the situation grew critical. A so-called National Assembly collected in the dining-room, ordered out the German and Austro-Hungarian Committees and told them savagely to go up again to the Administrator and demand a definite answer from him: did he or did he not consent to give out the officially prescribed bread ration?

A couple of minutes later we six were making for the Administration building; the revolutionary notice-board had disappeared by then. The three Germans went up the right-hand stairs, we went up the left-hand ones. We met in the office.

The Administrator received us in a Napoleonic pose, his maimed hand stuck into the front of his tunic. His thick, low-growing hair was curled, and smelled of brilliantine. His face was more reddish-blue than ever; a scornful smile played about his lips, but he was biting his moustache nervously and his little, deep-set eyes gleamed uneasily.

He was just on the point of speaking when from the yard there clanged up the call of the "*Appel général*."

We all went rather white. It was only the second time in my whole imprisonment that I had heard that call. Of course it was only allowed to be sounded officially. Now it meant the end of bayonet discipline.

The Administrator tried to force assurance into his voice. 'Mutiny?' he asked sharply.

Even through the shut window we could hear the clumping of clogs, the hammering of running feet as the men rushed towards the Administration building.

The Administrator went to the window. For a moment he stopped there, then came back, his face hard.

'What does this mean?'

Dignified old Kutzner, president of the German Committee, told him of our mission and asked him in view of the

general excitement to make a definite promise. The Administrator assured us of his goodwill, but dismissed us without having given a definite answer.

We went down the stairs fearing the worst. A voice shouted up from the crowd:

'Any result?'

We could only make a gesture of resignation.

Then there was one terrible yell and the whole crowd rushed up the double stairway, and, sweeping us with it, burst into the office.

The Administrator was behind his table, white as chalk, in one hand a revolver.

Luckily the more reasonable men stepped between him and the furious crowd, which was wildly smashing to splinters anything it could lay hands on. A storm of mad curses and bloody abuse was raging in every imaginable language. In the front rank stood little Edward, tall "Handsome Karl," Markus with a knife in his hand, the pale-moustached rat-hunter Katz, blond Max, Salz, grinning horribly, then the enormous Sedlar, goat-bearded Buchholz and that consistent drunkard Schutzmann. Crowding among them, howling for revenge, were gentle Váczy, now unrecognisable, Valery, Ványi, the Turks. . . . A mad, rebellious, frenzied outburst of strength with the Committees, Däumling and his friends, Müller, Bohnen, the powerful Bajusz and the rest of the more sober-minded men struggling to keep it in check.

The Administrator stood motionless, pressed to the wall, saying huskily again and again:

'*Mais, Messieurs . . . Mais, Messieurs.*'

Then began his arraignment. One after the other the tattered, starved figures stood out from the crowd and in French, German or whatever language came to them, asked him what he had done with the stolen bread. There was Klopfer among them, who of all his old luxury had only his beard left; Fuchs, once he of the green hat, now nothing but skin and bone; and Bistrán stepped forward, raising his hands

to Heaven and threatening not only the Administrator but the whole of France with the power of his degree.

The Administrator answered every one of them with a frightened, childish obedience, and all the time he kept looking upwards, blinking his eyes, as though an enormous block of stone were hanging over his head, ready at any moment to fall and crush him.

Suddenly he said the name of Leitner, the caterer. The crowd echoed that hated name with a roar. The Administrator saw the effect and set to blaming the German-Pole for everything. The men who were trying to avoid a fatal clash between the Administrator and the crowd seized the opportunity: 'Leitner's the man. Hunt out Leitner! Kill the swine!'

At that the crowd left the office as quickly as it had rushed in. They rushed down the stairs and scattered screaming about the yard to hunt out Leitner. And as soon as the crowd had left, the Administrator telephoned down to the harbour-commander for a company of sailors, and through the window ordered the guard to stand-to.

Of course Leitner was nowhere to be found. He had hidden somewhere, or he may have been out in the harbour-town, shopping. When the crowd had grown tired of hunting for him and returned to the yard, the sailors, who had arrived at the double, were drawn up with fixed bayonets in front of the Administration building.

Then the second, real "*Appel général*" rang out. The whole camp was made to form up in a half-circle facing the company of sailors, as they stood with rifles levelled. Between us and the sailors stood the Administrator with the harbour commandant, and behind them two sergeants. They spoke together for a few moments in low voices, and then the Administrator came towards us with the two sergeants.

Now we saw what was going to happen. The Administrator was going to pick out from among us those who according to him had been the leaders of the revolt.

Among the very first on the right stood Kutzner, the president of the German Committee. A grey-bearded, broad-shouldered, kind-faced man. Everybody in the camp was fond of him.

The Administrator went straight up to him and stopped opposite him. That was a terrible moment: if he had touched Kutzner the men would simply have hurled themselves on the garrison.

All life checked, as though the clouds had stopped and the birds hung suspended in the air. A great emptiness opened before us, and it only needed a little push and we should fall into it, throwing life and all pain into the infinite, rest-giving Nothing.

And then from the crowd there wailed up a thin, crying voice: '*Mein Kind, was wirst Du tun?*' Mad Heipel. A shiver ran through the motionless crowd of prisoners. The thought of death, till then so naturally and exclusively accepted, suddenly departed, and we remembered other people than ourselves, those who were waiting for us and almost watching our every inner movement.

The Administrator and the president of the German Committee were still facing each other. Then, as if he had thought better of it, the Administrator turned away from him and pointed out one after the other "Handsome Karl," Edward, Buchholz, Salz, Max, Markus, Klopfer and poor Remling, who of all must have been the most innocent, who could not possibly have touched anybody or anything because he had been taken by the mania of believing that his arms and legs were made of sugar, and would break if he touched anything.

Everybody to whom the Administrator pointed was seized and lugged off by the guards. For a little they stood there behind the sailors opposite us, we looking at them speechlessly and they looking back at us. Then the soldiers took them off, just as they were, hatless and coatless.

That afternoon the mutiny had another consequence.

The Administration asked Kutzner and two other Germans to take the arrested men's belongings down to the harbour prison. When they were in the prison office the Administrator banged the door on them and locked it. They and the other eight came before a French civil court after the Armistice, and were all pardoned. The verdict included a censure of the Administrator, but he was left where he was, to go on making his fortune out of his prisoners' misery.

CHAPTER XXII

COLLAPSE

THE news of the collapse of the German front in France and of the Armistice burst on the Citadel like a bombshell. The islanders heard the news from some American soldiers, and so it came to us in the evening of November 10th or the morning of the 11th. I cannot remember the date exactly, though I know it happened one day before Clemenceau's famous speech in the French Parliament, and before the French were officially allowed to celebrate the end of the four-year bloodshed. In the French coast towns the English and Americans had produced flags and fireworks only on the basis of the first rumour. But the authorities stopped the celebrations, and everything had to be postponed till a day later, when from the rostrum of the *Chambre des Députés* Clemenceau announced dramatically, "the guns thunder no more."

We Austro-Hungarians had not thought the end was so near, though after Foch's July and August offensives we had not much faith in the German forces ever gaining strength enough to force a decision on the Western front. But the Germans in *Ile d'Yeu* had not taken the French wearing attacks on the German line at all seriously. The French Press itself did not make any more fuss about the victories of Tardenois, Santerre, Ailette and Ancre, by which the Germans were pushed back into their original position of before the spring advance, than it had made of the insignificant French and English successes in 1917. They had been made a little uneasy by the September retirement to the Hindenburg line, followed by the famous shaking of that defensive

position, but had not by any means considered it a final blow.

The outlines of a great decisive battle had still not been discernible. The German army still stood, though somewhat dilapidated. It had completed all its retirements in order. We were in no position to appreciate the great difference between the German and the Allied armies.

Towards the end of October we had gathered from a jumble of unreliable newspaper reports that after the Bulgarian capitulation Turkey had also asked for an Armistice, that a Republic had been proclaimed in Austria and Hungary, the Czechs and Jugoslavs had formed independent States and that the Austro-Hungarian army had completely broken on the Piave. . . . Then we as well as the Germans presumed that the moment had come for the final reckoning between Germany and France. We imagined Kaiser Wilhelm at the head of his armies about either to force an honourable peace in one great final battle or himself perishing in the sea of blood he had played so great a part in creating.

Into all this excitement of expectation burst the news that the German front had collapsed. It came in a number of *La France* which arrived one evening two or three days before the Armistice and described with indisputable exactitude the German army's general retirement, and reported that the Germans had asked for an Armistice on November 6th and were in a situation which would oblige them to accept the cessation of hostilities on any terms whatever.

That had a dreadful effect on the Germans among us. They had never believed that the symptoms of collapse which had struck down Bulgaria, Turkey and Austria-Hungary could ever appear in their own country. Now they saw the end had come there too. They could not grasp the fact, nor understand any reason, but just as till then they had blindly trusted, so now they crashed in one stageless flight from the height of confidence and faith into the darkest abyss of despair.

They all gathered in a big group as though crowding together against a storm. They left their fatigues, the kitchen, the casemates, the corners where till then they had worked or read or talked. They came down from the rampart and the bastion yards and huddled together as though everywhere they were threatened by lightning and earthquake. Then, still together, they drifted from casemate to casemate. We watched them, not understanding what had happened to them, in what maze they walked, what they wanted, why they came. I think they did not know themselves. They were like a dazed, sleep-walking crowd, their every movement ordered by a common madness.

First they crowded into No. 51. They trod on the mattresses, knocked over the benches, swept anybody with them who got in their way. They flooded into the room with a growl of talking. They were all there. The Count, the flaxen-haired Baron, the gymnasts; Däumling, Nagel and their pupils, bearded Müller, who had had such an unshakable faith in the future of Germany, friendly Bohnen; then the old Noirmoutier lot—fat, oily Bürger, Däumler of the many letters, hook-nosed Hacke of the tail-coat, handsome Tienemann, Georges, Von Bergen; then Kaufmann the tennis-player, our own special friend Schuler, Levi the old owl of No. 51 who used to chew and read all day in his little den and only go out at night; the noisy, brawling seamen and workmen from Nos. 53 and 55; Biesenbach and Von der Hohe, the two business men; Klein and the cunning canteen waiter, the blond apprentice watchmaker, the drunkard Varvey, the water-carriers, Leitner's men, and all the commercial travellers and artisans whom we otherwise scarcely ever saw. Now they were melted into one mass, hard-crowding against each other. They were all talking, each as if talking to himself. Sometimes someone who had got hold of the copy of *La France* would read out a couple of lines, loudly, slowly, like a funeral oration. The names of army commanders sounded, of places: Foch, Debeney, Rawlinson,

Douglas Haig, Plateau de Bohain, Woevre, Lorraine. . . . Then the growl of talk swelled again, as though they were repeating it in German and explaining to each other what they had just heard.

They did not stay over a quarter of an hour in our room, and they did not see us nor realise we were there. They may not even have known where they were. They thronged out of the door as they had come in, in one mass, and went on to Nos. 53, 55, 52, 54. . . . Everywhere they stopped, crying aloud, growling, throwing up a fragment of speech like a black flag and then mingling again, to hustle and groan and set off again as though they had been the pitiful, distorted mirage of some great, distant, headless, fleeing crowd.

That mad, blind excitement of the Germans went on for days. Then about November 11th the official announcement arrived that the Armistice had been concluded. Celebration was allowed! A mighty French flag was hoisted on the highest point of the Citadel. And in the yard, in pouring rain, twenty or thirty of the prisoners set off with a band and lanterns to celebrate the end of the War. Their shadows were projected monstrously in the light of the lanterns, and in the wet mist of rain their fiddles and mandolins tinkled mockingly. They went round the yard once. No one joined them. Even the French soldiers watched them from under the gateway with some contempt. So the celebrators stopped, looked round and slunk back underground.

During November and December the situation became somewhat clearer to us. All faith in the invincibility of the German armies shaken. Hope of victory gone too. No leaders dared assume the responsibility of holding out any longer, and they themselves caught from their countries the spirit of utter dejection. Wilson's promises of peace hastening on the moral collapse and revolutions.

Almost in a matter of weeks everything that Wilson wanted happened. The German States one after the other banished their rulers. Scheidemann proclaimed the German Republic on November 9th. The Socialist Ebert became Chancellor and succeeded in crushing both the Bolshevist Spartakist attempts and the Bavarian Separatist rising. The last Habsburg, who could with justice say in the announcement of his abdication that "from the first moment after his accession he had ceaselessly worked for the ending of the War," left his dominions.

It would have been good then to believe that with the Empires and Imperialisms overthrown, at last after so much suffering and sacrifice peace was coming to Europe's freed peoples. But that did not occur to us in the casemates of Ile d'Yeu. To us there only came the echo, through the French Press, of demands for revenge and retribution. Clemenceau had given the word: there could be no reconciliation of Right and Wrong. Wrong meant Germany even rid of her Emperor, and Right was France under those leaders who, while Wilson was proclaiming a peace of reconciliation, themselves thought of nothing else but of plucking the fruits of French victory and of fortifying French Imperialism on all sides.

We were concerned with the eighteenth point in the Armistice Agreement, "the return of French civilian internees and hostages without reciprocity." Here was at last a point where we were not subjects of reciprocity. The gate of our prison was tighter shut than ever. Our life was not improved in any respect. Our letters, parcels and money still did not come, as usual, and if something did by chance reach us it was submitted to just as severe an examination as if the War had been still going on outside. Armed soldiers still stood in the gateway, and without one of them we might not go a step outside the Citadel. Now we had not even the benefits of reciprocity. . . .

Towards the end of November instructions arrived for the

men condemned as unfit by the Franco-Swiss medical commission to be sent off. I do not know if the order was accompanied by a confidential rider. But it is a fact that forty-three of us were lined up in front of the French military doctor of the prison-camp and Kohler, and those two men—that insignificant military doctor and the Francophile ex-nursing-home director—paying not the slightest attention to the international committee's decision, chose from all of us a mere ten for the sick convoy. 'He can go, he can't,' and in a few minutes our lives were decided. Men who during the War had been put on the supreme medical council's sick-list were thrust back six months, after the Armistice, into always increasing sufferings, by a crook of the doctor's finger. Among the refused were our two poor madmen, Tutschek and Katz, and others who a few weeks later died in imprisonment or who after their eventual release lived only a couple of months more at home.

But we were nobody's business. There was no one to call victorious France to account for us. We were not army commanders nor officers nor important personages. We were not even soldiers.

Without any especial shock I realised that I too was not to be sent to Switzerland. I had no strength, nor had the others, to revolt or defend ourselves against the last winter of imprisonment, which found us without clothes, without food, without tobacco, without money or news from home, while what we read in the French papers about Hungary presented such a nightmare picture that our imaginations did not dare to approach it.

The white, emaciated faces of the other Hungarians looked at me like unanswerable question-marks—What is going to happen to us? What is going to happen to Hungary? I took to spending much of my time with the carpenters. They still went on working, and there was much comfort in watching them. Some of the others used to come there too. Often there would be twenty or thirty of us in the car-

penters' den, making the air stuffy—but we did not then feel the cold.

When the early darkness fell Jankovits would come in and show the new picture he was working on. It was always some revolutionary theme. A cartoon of the collapsing German and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Caricatures of Clemenceau and Poincaré. Even in the winter cold he still wore his white open-necked shirt and blue canvas trousers. It was all he had. But his face was red and his eyes gleamed with a sick light. He spoke with a terrible hate of *bourgeois* society, which could achieve equality only in the one respect of sending ten million men to death for its mendacious ideals. That young painter was no longer concerned with such conceptions as home and country. He had discarded everything that reminded him of the old world. He saw Europe as a factory, which, just as it had earlier poured forth boots and clothes and all manner of wares all for profit, so now was producing shells, fire-arms, suffering and death, again with the sole aim of securing its profit. He saw no difference between nations, conquerors and conquered. He lived in a complete new world. On what was now going on he looked back: he did not argue and hesitate and worry as we did. He simply judged coldly and mercilessly.

There were some similar spirits among the Germans and Austrians. We had no idea how they had become so. Probably under the influence of events in Russia, of which we had read very little: or perhaps French mercilessness lashed them to it. One morning above Casemate No. 52, stuck in the grass of the rampart-side, there flapped a red flag. No one knew who had put it there. The Administrator did not inquire, but merely burnt it then and there.

On December 10th the Germans were taken away. No one knew where they were being taken to. According to some of the men it was already a question of their being sent home

in accordance with an older exchange agreement concluded before the Armistice. The Armistice had altered it all, but now the French were going to fulfil their obligations. But others saw in it nothing but an ordinary shifting of prisoners: the Germans were being sent to a bigger camp, from where in due course it would be easier to send them home in parties of five hundred or so. Weeks later we heard that the Germans actually had been sent home. Their party was the first to arrive, and after that there was a pause of half a year in the despatch of civilian internees.

The Citadel was very empty after the Germans had gone. Scarcely more than ten or fifteen Austro-Hungarians were left in the various casemates. Thereupon the Administrator shut up the uneven-numbered side and herded the inhabitants of those casemates into the other three. The Francophiles, whose interests bound them to France, had of course also been left behind. First and foremost Kohler, then Leitner the kitchen chief, Michel of the canteen and about twenty others. The three Turks and the Bulgarian were also left with us.

We missed the Germans for a long time. It was not so difficult to see them go, but afterwards we sank deeper than ever into the hopelessness of our abandonment. There had been no show of triumphant delight among the Germans when the news of their release at last came. They had packed hastily, with a strange, sad feverishness, like men with a long journey before them and only a mourning ceremony at the end.

They bequeathed all their prison accessories to us. Libraries, musical instruments, games. And we accepted it all in a sort of strange daze, like mortally sick men hearing words of consolation. Von Bergen was going too, of course. He took nothing with him at all. He chipped out his last miniature of the Russian woman, exactly the one hundred and fiftieth since his imprisonment, and solemnly buried it on the rampart. He had no further need of the wooden

statuettes now, for the living model had been waiting for him in Germany ever since the Armistice.

In the dawn greyness all the well-known, shadowy figures trooped out of the Citadel gate. We were left to our loneliness and to a great silence where our voices seemed to echo hollowly. Pesek had gone with the Germans too: an American uncle had interceded for him. He was probably set free. With him had gone my neighbour in No. 51, Wolfner, who for the last four years had been writing petition after petition for his transfer to a military prison-camp. Now his petition was granted, the War being over.

With the German Francophiles there were altogether about a hundred and twenty of us left in the Citadel. The privileged Germans took possession of the two good rooms, and some of us, when the uneven-numbered casemates were shut up, moved out of No. 51 into the smaller No. 36, where since the Germans' departure only the gypsy Horváth was left.

For the rest the usual life went on, with the difference that we had no inclination to work, talk or occupy ourselves in any fashion whatsoever. We simply waited wearily, often in day-long immobility, for the days to pass over us, and were often only conscious of their passing as of someone's shadowy figure passing behind a window of mist and rain.

One afternoon in the second half of December the yard suddenly woke to life. Eight of the American soldiers stationed on the island paid us a visit. Eight cheerful young fellows in Scout hats and sporty-looking uniforms shouting loud "hallo's" and laughing tremendously. We all crowded round them, staring. Shipwrecked men after years of privation might look like that at their rescuers. The American soldiers were very friendly and communicative. One of them began by saying, with a laugh:

'We haven't found as many people who could speak English, these last months, in the whole of France as in this prison.'

They produced chocolate and tobacco out of the big poacher's-pockets of their coats, and gave all they had to us. We showed them the casemates and the dining-room and kitchen. They were aghast. The eldest of them produced a note-book:

'Now tell me what you need. Those cellars must be heated. . . . Now, coal, coffee, sugar, tea, cocoa, tinned meat. . . . Let's see how many there are of you, so as to know how much is needed.'

We told him, and the American soldiers did not quarrel about who was to give least. Finally the eldest of them, who must have been an officer of some sort, promised that the next day coal, sugar, coffee and tea should be sent up to us.

'Only don't give the French any of it. That's our only condition,' he added almost savagely. It was just then that bitterness against the French was beginning to spread among the American soldiers.

They stayed in the Citadel till the evening. We took them into one of the casemates, and Horváth's and Fritz Labes' little orchestra played the American National Anthem and some American and English songs. The Americans were in high spirits. Only they kept on feeling their pockets. Then we realised they had given all their tobacco to us. But they would not hear of taking any back. So we offered them some of our own specialities—cigarettes made out of nasturtium leaves soaked in tobacco juice. They smoked them heroically to the end, coughing and spluttering. We showed them our evening soup too, which for months past had always been the same—turnips mixed with a few potatoes.

They were still loudly indignant when they shook hands with us in front of the Citadel gate. Our guards watched them sourly. The Americans took no notice of them.

The next day and the days after we waited in vain for the promised presents. A week passed and neither the Americans themselves came, though they had faithfully promised to

visit us, nor their presents. We guessed somebody must have interfered. Later it turned out that the Administrator and the local French authorities had protested strongly to the Americans' superiors against their coming to the Citadel or sending us any assistance.

CHAPTER XXIII

DANSE MACABRE

HATE and Death had called no armistice yet, though the great Powers had ceased hostilities. From December on our confinement became stricter and stricter, food grew scarcer, and, as though Nature too had conspired against us, storms raged ceaselessly out at sea, or thick fog descended on the island. From five in the afternoon till morning the foghorn sounded endlessly to give wandering ships their direction. That constant, eerie alarm-signal was as though reminding us every minute of unnoticed perishing in desolation.

In the gloomy distance of that prospectless languishing loomed the danger of "Spanish" influenza. Outside on the island the disease had been raging ever since December. We knew there were not enough doctors out there, and practically no medicines at all. There was hardly any aspirin, not to mention quinine. The reason was not the interruption of the boat traffic by the stormy weather so much as the general lack of medicines in France, a lack which reached its climax in the months following the Armistice precisely because of the influenza epidemic.

If those were the conditions outside, what are we to expect inside? We were fit enough prey for the murderous illness. We lay there like rats crowding together away from the rising water in their underground sewers. The disease could do what it wanted. . . .

In the week before Christmas we made up our minds, whatever happened, to attempt to organise some memorable celebrations, even if we had to force ourselves to enjoy them.

During December there had been altogether five cases of

illness among us. It had consisted of slight fever, and had lasted two or three days. At that time we had not considered those to be influenza cases. Later we realised, from the fact that they did not get the disease, that they had been the beginners of it all. Three of them, Kaiser, Crombek and Neuberth, had always used to go down to the harbour town to fetch the bread and the parcels, and the other two, Wildner the Austrian barber and Schlotter a Hungarian tanner, had at that time done the marketing in the village. I do not know what would have become of us if those five had not become immune, and when the epidemic came had not been able to do the nurses' work.

We tried to encourage each other by saying the illness would perhaps miss us in our strict confinement. The important thing was not to think about it. We must try to draw everybody into the preparations for our Christmas festivities.

Ziffer, Jantschek—the two Austrian members of the committee—and I decided to arrange a general supper for Christmas Eve, preceding it by a cabaret performance.

We chose the emptied No. 51 for our cabaret. The orchestra had been practising its pieces for weeks. The programme consisted of a couple of monologues in German, a little one-act play and a performance by Dr. Herz. Jankovits made a Christmas placard, at my request: it showed a shrunken little old woman, holding her child by the hand, standing in the snowy street and looking through the window at the rich man's sparkling Christmas-tree. A real proletarian painter's work. . . . Two weeks later Jankovits was lying dead in No. 51, now the camp mortuary, just under his own placard.

Everybody had a part in the fever of celebration. In the kitchen the preparations lasted for days. There, instead of the Polish-German Leitner, now our own Leitner, the man who used to smoke meat in Noirmoutier, had been appointed. Under his command the thefts had stopped. . . . We decorated No. 51 with branches of evergreen and paper wreaths and

made a big Christmas-tree out of real pine-branches. Everybody instinctively hurried.

On the day before Christmas Eve Dudás and little Moritz Stein, of No. 36, which was my room, fell seriously ill. There were cases in other rooms too.

So it had reached us.

By the day of Christmas Eve there was someone ill in every room.

The two Austrian committee members came to me to decide what was to be done. Were we still to hold the dinner and supper and so risk the illness spreading in the crowded room, or should we give the whole evening up? We voted for carrying the whole thing through. It was in any case impossible to isolate the disease among the weakened, half-starved men, who since the rearrangement of the casemates again had to lie only a hand's-breadth from each other.

But I myself had to give up my part in the celebrations. There was a sleepy weariness in all my limbs. Fever, it seemed.

There were nine of us in No. 36. On one side Dudás, the gypsy Horváth, then Jankovits, and lastly a Rumanian boy from Transylvania called Juon Demeter, who had lately returned from field-work. On the other side, counting from the window opening on the moat, Soltész, Németh, Stein and Rubin. I was between Stein and Rubin. We had moved into that little floored casemate after the Germans had gone because it was much quieter than the big casemates.

We had not reckoned that while gaining in peacefulness we were losing light and air completely. Our single, half-moon-shaped slit of a window opened on the moat and our door on the passage, through which it needed a good five minutes' stumbling to reach the yard. And by now the yard was the only place where there was light and air.

Perhaps that was why by Christmas Eve all nine of us in

No. 36 were ill. Though we suspected the gypsy Horváth of keeping to his mattress only so as not to attract the illness' attention. But he too put on all his warm clothes and rolled himself in his blanket. In short, he "undressed." The orchestra had to work without him.

At eight they brought us supper. The magnificent festive meal which was to have indemnified us for our months of hunger was made of all the Red Cross reserve stores. Although we were ill we were all looking forward to the beef-steak and the jam pudding. But none of us could eat his share. All the good things we had so longingly awaited remained on their plates. The kitchen-men took the remains away, wagging their heads grimly. It was then that the Austrians christened No. 36 the "*Totenkammer*," and, as I learned later, there had spread like wildfire through the celebrators gathered in No. 51 the terrible rumour that everybody in No. 36 was mortally ill.

We were enveloped in a darkness with which the single candle on the table struggled in vain. It only threw on the wall the big shadows of the parcels of "freedom" clothes hung on wires stretched across the room.

That evening the illness' terrifying characteristics showed themselves. Dudás was coughing terribly. Moritz Stein was spitting blood, bespattering my blanket. Rubin's face shone with a gleaming whiteness as though it had drawn to itself all the light in the room, like a tombstone in a graveyard by night. He complained of the illness affecting his stomach.

The rest were comparatively quiet: they only tossed about much from having taken heavy food into their feverish bodies.

From very far away fragments of music drifted in, as though the fine silver threads of sound were stealing through the cracks in the stone wall. They were curiously clearly distinguishable in spite of the hooting of the owls circling in the moat outside and the ceaseless moaning of the fog-horn.

Dudás sat up on his mattress.

'Do you hear?' he asked in a shrill, whispering, hoarse voice. Only we two were awake. The rest were asleep or struggling with their fever nightmares.

'It would be good to look in there for a moment,' the flying man said. I had thought of that too.

We put on our clogs, wound scarves round our throats, put knitted caps on our heads and set off hand-in-hand through the long pitch-dark passage towards No. 51.

No. 51 was in a blaze of unrecognisable, dazzling light.

Chinese lanterns swam in the smoke-filled air. All round the walls ran the wreaths of evergreen branches and paper flowers. In one corner there glittered a mighty Christmas-tree. At big tables and little were sitting the revellers, all in high spirits and in their best clothes, grog steaming in front of them.

We stopped in the doorway.

Who were all these men? We did not recognise a man or a thing.

But when that cheerful crowd caught sight of us a strange, frightened growl ran through them, something quite different from the cheerful buzz of before, as though a damp, chilling wind had blown in through the door we opened.

I looked at Dudás, and understood. The horrible pallor and greenish hollowness of his face startled even me. He was as if risen from the grave, for even the damp and grime of the earth were still on him. His eyes shone with a flickering, dying light as though it were not he there but someone else watching the feasters through the mask of his face. . . . Perhaps ambushed Death itself.

I must have looked much the same. A strayed ghost from the "*Totenkammer*."

A sudden silence fell in the room. Heger was on the stage, in the middle of his turn. Noticing the silence he stopped, shaded his eyes with his hand and so stood, looking at us.

But first his grinning face had sobered. . . .

I grabbed my friend by the arm and tried to drag him away.

But Dudás came only very heavily, for he was staring with fever-dilated eyes at the lit room, drinking and drinking in the coloured lamps and the glitter of the Christmas-tree. . . .

During the night of Christmas Eve the two most serious cases, Dudás and Moritz Stein, never shut their eyes. The aviator coughed ceaselessly. One would have thought his lungs must tear. He had no longer any voice, only a hoarse, gasping croak broke from his tortured lungs and windpipe, as though the illness' skeleton hand were pressing his throat tighter and tighter.

Little Moritz Stein kept on jumping up from his mattress, throwing off his blanket, thrusting out his fever-scorched chest and staring with starting eyes in front of him. I entreated him in a whisper to calm himself. He only shook his head. Then I had to get up and cover him up all over as tightly as might be. But he scarcely lay still for more than a quarter of an hour. The supper had been fatal for his stomach. He vomited, then began spitting blood again. . . .

We were left absolutely to ourselves. One would have had to go for a good ten minutes along the dark passage in the damp, misty cold to find water or some vessel or other with which to dispose of the sick men's vomit. And there was no one we could send. Everybody was feverish, coughing, moaning and tossing on his rustling straw mattress. . . .

I did not know what time it was. The night had stopped for ever over us.

I had to tear myself away from those surroundings, if only in imagination. The reality was so horrible that I would then willingly have fled from it even at the price of the loss of consciousness for ever. I tried to think of what was going on outside in the world, in Paris and Budapest and my home town. But there was small comfort in that. . . .

There were some books scattered on the ground beside my mattress, among them a French edition of the *Fioretti* of

St. Francis, which Zádory had given me long ago when he was sent off to the penal camp. I began reading a little passage that I especially loved, about St. Francis and Brother Leon on the road from Perugia to Assisi through the storm. And so I went on reading. Over and over again the same passage.

I had to get up three or four times to tuck Moritz Stein's blanket in. And then went on reading.

I gave Dudás a glass of water. I looked at the two schoolmasters. They were asleep. Jankovits' face was very red. His eyes were fixed on the bare, mould-streaked stone vaulting, and he did not speak. I had to tuck Juon Demeter's blanket in too, for he was vomiting incessantly. Rubin was lying quiet with his eyes shut, but I could see he was not asleep.

I too lay down again, shut my eyes and was just beginning all over again to tell myself the story of how St. Francis and Brother Leon went along the road from Perugia to Assisi, when from the corridor outside came the sound of an echoing cough, coming nearer and nearer.

Who could that be? Who had wandered late at night to the part of the passage which only led to us?

A few minutes later there came a scratching at our door and through the chink peered the greying head, pock-marked, bushy-bearded face of Bistrán.

Brother Demeter! I had not seen the old man for a long time. For months, ever since utter misery descended on us and the old man never saw alcohol even to look at, he had turned quite sane, almost as though completely cured of his madness. He used to spend all day patching stockings and ragged shirts.

'Are you feeling bad, my children?' asked Demeter, and came further into the room.

In one hand he was carrying Jacob's lantern, and in the other he was clutching a bottle of wine. No one answered, and he raised the lantern above his head and slowly went the round of the mattresses.

I beckoned to him, for I could not speak aloud.

Demeter came up quite close to me, cocked his head interrogatively at me, and one point of his moustache twitched upwards a little, as though he wanted to give room to the benevolent smile that ran across his lips.

'Aren't you afraid, Demeter?' I whispered to him.

Demeter drew himself up and planted himself firmly on both feet like a man not easily to be shifted.

'Do you think with my degree I can't stand up to a little thing like Death?' he said, with a disdainful gesture. 'But enough of that. I knew you were very lonely, so I came to see if you needed anything.'

Indeed if that was all there was enough matter for help there. Bistrán put down his lantern on the table, put his bottle of wine beside it, and set to work. He betrayed no nausea at anything and could be as gentle with the sick men as a trained nurse. Everybody suddenly woke up, everybody had some want. He wiped the sweat from the one, made a cold compress for the other. He found something to arrange at nearly everybody's mattress. He only shook his head in perplexity when delirious Moritz Stein told him to fetch his sister. . . .

That he could hardly have done, whatever his degree, for Moritz Stein's sister lived in Budapest.

Two or three times he went out to the kitchen, on to the water-barrel and then back again. Gradually he got everything into order. Then, when he had finished, he sat down on the bench by the table, took a mighty swig at his bottle, wiped his moustache and looked round with the greatest satisfaction.

My fever was getting worse. Demeter's dirty, hair-grown face grew and swam and became distorted before my eyes. He was telling me some story about the time when he was a hussar in Transylvania. He was a first-year recruit and everybody's joke. They used to kick him and knock him about and call him a "pock-marked scrub."

Then one day he found himself in the street. I do not

know how it happened. Probably he deserted. Only a winter scene caught my attention in all his talk. Somewhere on the outskirts of the town, Demeter, tramping in freezing cold, half-starved and weary to death.

Then again another picture, very vivid. Gaudily dressed girls sitting round a table. On the red table-cloth a little Christmas-tree. Demeter there among the painted girls. Everybody spoiling him as though he were their brother. Feeding him, making him drink good, hot, rum-laced tea. Then Demeter singing Christmas carols to them. The girls crying.

Then suddenly a great thundering at the door. A patrol burst in. The waxy-moustached sergeant, the one who had always found the worst things to bellow at the "pock-marked scrub," came forward. He was cursing now too.

'You young swine, so this is the sort of place you spend Christmas Eve in?'

Then there was a row. Demeter was not taking it lying down. He answered back truculently, for all he had been grabbed by two soldiers.

'I have had a dog's life all the time, only because I was an orphan, but I've never gone through such hell as in barracks.'

The sergeant did not answer, only pulled at his moustache, looked at Demeter out of the corner of his eye and said suddenly:

'So you were an orphan too.'

I do not know what the end of the story was. Demeter went on talking, but all I heard was "orphan, orphan," over and over again, and the word covered me like two great, warm wings, and rocked me to sleep.

In the next few days the illness came with a rush, seizing every man in the Citadel. I have no idea what was happening outside. Only once or twice a day I slipped, coated and muffled up, to the corrugated-iron sheds at the end of the yard. Then I would meet other like shadows, but we never

spoke to each other. Each man only hurried back into his own pestilential den.

The military doctor detailed to attend the Citadel probably looked in once or twice. It must have been he who gave instructions to the five men who had already gone through the illness and were acting as nurses. Probably Kohler, as head of the infirmary, helped as well.

They had two medicines: painting the men's throats and chests with iodine, and applying glasses evacuated of air by burning cotton-wool to their chests and backs to stimulate the circulation of the blood at the affected parts.

The nurses had a thermometer too. They took the more serious cases' temperatures every day. Kaiser and Crombeck used to come to attend to us every afternoon. Once Kohler came with them too. He puffed cigarette-smoke in the sick men's faces, apparently to protect himself from infection.

In this way we received a little news about the others. On the day after Christmas Zaruba, the careful, gentle accountant who used always to be seen in No. 54 working in his sleeve-protectors, had died. That was the first death. Then had come Neuhaus. The cold-water treatment, the ceaseless runs round the yard had all been of no use. Ever since the beginning of his imprisonment he had watched over his health, and he was among the first of the victims. . . . No. 51 was converted into a mortuary with the Christmas decorations and placards still all on the wall, and there they laid the dead men out.

The disease was appearing in all its various forms. There were some men who were quit of it for a couple of days' fever and a slightly inflamed throat. Soltész and Németh were in this class. Soltész was able to help with the nursing from the very first day of the epidemic. But in many cases the disease was aggravated into pneumonia. In others it went to the men's stomachs. And there were some who raved in such delirium that they had to be tied down to their mattresses.

The yard became deserted. There was ceaseless fog and drizzling, snowy rain. The guards too fell ill.

In No. 36 the most serious case was Moritz Stein. He made himself worse by not being able to keep still. On the second day after Christmas he even got up and dressed and spent the whole day sitting in the hut which Jacob had built himself on one of the bastions. All the time he had a temperature of about 104° , yet that day, on Jacob's persuasion—who held food to be the best medicine—he ate a stew of beans.

In the afternoon the nurses came to look for him to take him to No. 53, where the bad cases were. But Moritz Stein only staggered back into our room in the evening.

For days he wandered in delirium. He had not shut his eyes ever since Christmas Eve. We entreated him to get under his blanket and try to go to sleep.

That day, through the nurses, I managed to obtain a bottle of syrupy cough-mixture from the chemist down at the harbour. Before going to sleep I gave every one of the sick men some of that only medicine.

Jankovits was the quietest of us all. He lay full-dressed on his mattress with nothing between it and the bare floor, rolled in his blanket. He started awake from some feverish vision or other when I stopped beside him with the bottle of medicine. When he had grasped what it was about he smiled and said:

'There must be something really the matter if I am to get some medicine.'

That was all I heard him say the whole time he was ill, and that spoonful of syrup was the only medicine he ever got.

Poor Juon Demeter was as pleased as a child at the taste of the sweet medicine. After it he quietened down for the night and slept well till the morning.

For the rest we were all held by a sort of tense expectation. Death was among us and we did not know whom he would choose.

At nine we had to put the lamp out. We lit the candle and

the room became apparent in its accustomed nightly half-darkness where the hanging clothes cast horrible shadows, and where the mice fought shrilly squealing for such crumbs as had fallen to the floor.

The hours passed and I was just beginning to think we were going to have a peaceful night when towards midnight Moritz Stein got up from his bed and in speechless seriousness began to take down his best suit from the wire where it hung wrapped in rags and newspaper. It was a fine, dark-blue suit which he had kept jealously, so as to be able to wear it the day he was set free.

It was no good my beseeching him to stop his dressing and lie down again. He only shook his head.

'My sister is waiting for me out there,' he said, his voice shrill and whispering from hoarseness, and pointed with a trembling hand to the door.

Then the others woke up. We besought him not to try to go out now in the middle of the night. We told him his sister was coming for him the next day at noon.

It was no use. Horváth tried to stop him, but he shook him off as if he had been a feather. The urge for freedom was rising in the weakly little fellow with tremendous strength.

He dressed completely, even putting on his overcoat and cap. Then he set off, slowly. He stopped once at the door and looked back as though to say good-bye.

Then he went out of the door and quietly shut it after him.

Those few minutes he was away seemed like long years. And perhaps in truth long years passed. When Moritz Stein came back we did not recognise him. His face had shrunk together, deep wrinkles had gathered on his forehead, the light in his eyes had died out. He had become quite old.

He took a few steps forward. He raised his finger and wagged it long and slowly in front of his face, and in a dreadful, soundless voice said only:

'There's nobody there. . . . No one has come. . . .'

I do not know what was going on in his head. He un-

dressed again, put back his suit where it belonged, and lay down.

I asked Horváth to go and fetch the nurses. Soon two of them came for him with a stretcher. He did not protest, nor say a word. He just lay down on the stretcher and let himself be carried away.

Half an hour later one of the nurses came back again and asked Soltész to come with him to No. 53, because Moritz Stein wanted to make his will.

He gave his last wishes quite clearly. He asked Soltész to take his blue suit to his sister in Budapest. He died the same night.

The drunkard Schutzmann, who washed and dressed the dead men, came and told us. His last words had been: 'Now I am going to Budapest.'

Schutzmann hunted out a set of linen from among poor little Moritz Stein's effects. Then he picked up the whole bundle, stuck it under his arm and went off.

The place next to me remained empty.

The increasing number of deaths in the Citadel, and among them that of Moritz Stein, had as result, apparently, that on the fifth day of the epidemic we were vouchsafed a glimpse of the doctor.

He came in the morning. Kohler and two nurses ushered him in. He was an oldish gentleman with carefully brushed hair and a fat, rosy face. He had a brand-new uniform on. He brought a rush of life with him, and our eyes drank him in greedily. In the eternal half-light of No. 36 he shone like the sun.

He stopped in the middle of the room and ordered us to put our tongues out one after the other.

'*Oui, c'est la grippe . . . c'est la grippe,*' he repeated after each examination, and wagged his head.

He payed Dudás special attention, going up to him and

putting his ear to his back. He listened for a moment, then he straightened up and declared with an encouraging chuckle: 'The man's got lungs as strong as a crab's shell.'

He was just going to go away again when we asked him, through Kohler, to look at Jankovits.

So he put his ear to Jankovits' back too. But this time he was not satisfied. He made a little downward movement of his hand, and said only:

'Tant pis.'

It did not matter that the sick man heard him.

Then the doctor and his suite left the room. His going was like his coming, military.

An hour later the nurses came for Jankovits and took him to No. 53. We knew what that meant. He must have known it too. But he said nothing.

At six o'clock in the evening the nurses came and told us that he had died. They looked for his belongings so as to dress him. He had nothing.

That evening we lay in No. 36, silent and apathetic. Whose turn was it now? Jankovits' death had stupefied us. In the case of Moritz Stein we had been sure it would end tragically. He had been there among us with his fever and his pains and the symptoms of his illness, for days on end. But Jankovits had been health, strength and youth itself. He had scarcely coughed, never complained. The only thing that had made us uneasy had been the redness of his face and his motionless, staring eyes. That was why we asked the doctor to examine him. We had not thought he was to die in a few hours. . . .

We were all fairly resigned. Only Juon Demeter rebelled. He could see there was no medicine, no help, and a doctor who, if he as an exception did look in, was capable of nothing more than ascertaining "*Tant pis.*"

He himself could do more than that. Towards seven o'clock in the evening he decided to treat himself to a mighty sweat. He put his coat on and went up to the rampart, and

there in mist and rain ran panting up and down for two hours. About nine o'clock he came back, armed with five pounds of potatoes and a little prison stove.

He fried the potatoes and ate them to the last chip. After that he put on every piece of clothing he possessed, wrapped himself in his blanket up to his chin, and lay down.

He wanted to sweat.

If that was all that poor Juon wanted to do, he sweated. About midnight he was throwing the blanket and clothes off one after the other.

I tried to warn him against doing it. The room was so cold that our breath steamed. If he uncovered himself like that when still sweating he might catch a dangerous chill. Juon listened obediently. He pulled the blanket over himself again. His teeth were chattering and the sweat was dripping off his forehead.

I thought he was quietly going to sleep. But he only kept still for a little. He began tossing from side to side. He could not stand the heat inside him. Sometimes he jerked his body so violently that he was almost in the air, as though a strong hand was pressing on him and he would not suffer it to keep him down.

Then suddenly he leapt up on his bed. He was in a shirt and long pants. Blood was streaming from his nose, and the thick, home-spun stuff of his shirt was so soaked with sweat that it could not absorb the blood. I called to him, but he did not listen. He only stood there staring in front of himself with knitted brows, as though he were looking at someone.

I put on my coat and went over to him to make him lie down. But I could not let him get back into bed in such a soaking state. I asked him if he had anything clean to put on.

Only after a long time did he turn his glance on me. And then he only looked at me in a bewildered fashion as though he did not know who I was and how I came there.

I took hold of his hand and begged him in a whisper to

listen to me. He must see the others were asleep. He was going to sleep well too, but he must put on something clean.

At the touch of my hand he shuddered, and life welled back into his eyes. He knelt down like a child with his hands clasped on his chest, and in a little, pitiful voice asked:

‘I am not going to die too, am I?’

I consoled him as best might be. I told him the nose-bleeding was a good sign. The nurses had told me so. Only now he must put some clean things on and lie down again.

Juon pointed to where his things were. While he undressed I opened his little wooden trunk: a good, clean, home-like smell came from it. There were coloured pictures stuck to the bottom half of the lid, and in the middle a picture-postcard, with a girl’s scrawling handwriting on it, fixed with drawing-pins.

Juon was a very orderly fellow. He had stuck a fringe of saw-edged paper, of the sort with which we decorate the kitchen shelves in our country, all round the inside of the box. I found the clean underclothes among the carefully packed things. He still had everything of homespun stuff.

He changed his things submissively and gratefully, and huddled under his blanket again.

‘I am as light as a bird.’

Then he went quietly to sleep.

. . . The next morning he too was dead.

In the afternoon of New Year’s Eve Jantschek, one of the members of the Austrian committee, came to see me. He was a brave man.

Jantschek had a complaint to make about old Jacob Vantur. He knew the Polish tanner would listen to me, and so came to ask me to oppose Jacob vigorously in a horrible affair. The matter was that the effect of the death-dance in the Citadel on the old man was to aggravate his avarice and covetousness a hundredfold. He would watch for the dying

men's moments of semi-consciousness and then he would buy everything of them for practically nothing. He had even swindled away Moritz Stein's blue suit for a few francs. That in spite of the fact that Moritz Stein had willed that Soltész should take his blue suit to Budapest. Jacob would not give up an atom of his winnings.

I promised Jantschek to attend to the old tanner as soon as I was well enough.

After Christmas there had arrived little presents for each of us from the Spanish Red Cross. Gingerbread and figs and dates. All such desirable things as we were not allowed to touch while we were ill.

The parcels were all on the shelves above their owners' heads.

Vantur was buying up these parcels dirt-cheap from such sick men whose recovery was uncertain. He had a wonderful flair for this business. Anybody with whom Jacob began to bargain for his Christmas parcel could write finish to his life.

Jantschek left No. 36 somewhat reassured. The other men in the room had taken no part in our talk. They were all lying on their mattresses in dumb resignation.

Through the half-moon window opening on the moat crept in the darkness of the seventh terrible night. There was still fog outside. The fog-horn was moaning ceaselessly. The owls were beginning their endless circling flights, their eerie hootings a fit accompaniment to the nightmare visions that thronged up against the threatening black material of the night.

No one came to see us now. Even Brother Demeter did not come. Since his visit on Christmas Eve he had been coughing more, and had taken fright. Since then he had done his best to look in on us two or three times during the night. But he only came as far as the door. I used to recognise his cough as he turned into a passage. The well-known, welcome clumping of his clogs sounded from nearer

and nearer. Then suddenly there would be a great silence. There must have been a great struggle going on in Brother Demeter. Apparently he did not consider even his "degree" infallible now. At the slightest opportunity he turned tail, and later even gave up trying to come.

My only visitor was Schutzmann, the washer of the dead. He was drawn to me by the litre of rum which in spite of the feeble light he had discovered on my shelf. He always came at night, sat down on the edge of my bed, took a few swigs at the rum-bottle and then told me whom he had washed and laid out that evening.

At first I had a horror of him, but later I grew used to it.

Just as I had grown used to the thought of Death.

It seemed to me I had been lying in that crypt for years. My hands clasped on my chest were as heavy as a coffin-lid. There was no hope and no vision of a future. There were many people who had loved me and had died. It should not be a bad thing to join them. Perhaps there were more of them, and who perhaps had a greater love for me than the living. But it was difficult to see them as they might be, dead.

The outlines of everything in the room were slowly blurring. The damp, green-grey stone vault was growing dim and floating, and the mice scuttling from one hole in the wall to the other were like little grey balls of wool being twitched upwards by a big, bony, yellow hand.

It was not a bad feeling, so to be sinking. There was almost relief in the thought that that yellow hand was gradually pulling up and away the scenery of life round me. If there was to be no vault, then there would be no mice, there would be no walls—and then there would be no life. Then I should not be, either.

So I lay, dully, and scarcely roused myself when someone quietly opened the door. Someone was coming nearer. At first I only saw his shadow on the wall. A strange, horribly looming shadow-figure. Hunch-backed, sunk-chested, its

thin shanks disappearing into bulgy seven-league boots. Its head on outstretched neck darting and peering hither and thither. Then the shadow slid up to the ceiling, and Jacob Vantur was standing before me.

His cheek-bones protruded and his eyes glittered greenly in his deep-sunk eye-sockets. He must have had four or five waistcoats on, at least two coats and two pairs of trousers, yet I could see clearly that the whole man was nothing but a skeleton. . . .

He had not recognised me. He was only looking searchingly at my shelf. He was slowly taking stock of each man's belongings.

At which one of us was that horrible man going to stop who could feel the threat of death on others, and haggled for their mortal remains? He seemed Death himself, who had put on all those clothes only so that we should not recognise the fleshless horror of him.

A sweating, heart-thumping fear seized me as Jacob Vantur prowled about the room. It was not so easy to die, after all. The desire for life woke to rebellion in me, and I wanted to weep and entreat that green-eyed high-booted creature not to bargain for my parcel, for all my future and all my hope was stored in it. All my life.

Jacob Vantur went slowly towards the door. He put his hand on the latch, and looked round once more. . . . One terrible moment more, and then he went out of the room.

It must have been just midnight. A new year began.

CHAPTER XXIV

BLOOD

ALL January 1919 this struggle with death went on in the Citadel of Ile d'Yeu. At first every casemate was a hospital ward, then the slier cases raised their heads above the bacillus-fog which had descended on the fort. The bugle-calls to meals sounded again, Kohler opened the window of his office-room and set to handing out two or three letters every day—all from the relatives in France of the remaining Germans, for all contact with any other country was cut off. Then prisoners appeared again in the yard, going towards the dining-room or the kitchen, and life returned to the Citadel.

I still had something of a temperature, but I too went out once or twice. Dudás too tried getting up. He was hardly recognisable. Rubin had also passed the critical point. Soltész was out and about all day, helping the overworked nurses. Németh took to his books again and Horváth to his fiddle. . . . Illness was by now confined only to No. 53, where the serious cases lay. I used to go up to the shut door sometimes and hear a terrible noise and crying. As though that one casemate had preserved all the old noises of prison life. Beside it, open-doored, No. 53, where the dead were laid out, was all the quieter. A few candles flickered under the dark vault. Lately Gasser, Reiner and Stoff had lain there, all three of them Austrians who from the very beginning had been confined with the Germans in Ile d'Yeu. Then had come the middle Stocker, the one who always used to be carving figures of animals.

There was all ground for fear that he would not be the last. There were still several in No. 53 whose condition was

getting worse from day to day. Dr. Herz was among them. One day towards the end of January one of the nurses came to me to say that the Austrian schoolmaster wanted to speak to me. I asked Auer what hopes there were of Dr. Herz' recovery. The little, thin, black-haired Austrian waiter made a sorrowful gesture.

I crossed the threshold of No. 53, and for a moment was lost. The sick men were invisible in the half-light of the casemate. There came groans and delirious cries from so far away that I had not believed there could be more men lying there. As though that ghastly tunnel where the men lay had no end, a dark throat of pain opening into endless, inscrutable distance. . . .

Then gradually I saw. The sick men lay somewhat further apart than in the other casemates. There were glasses and bottles of iodine and bits of cotton-wool and wet rags and basins on the table. The air in the room was unbearably stuffy.

The white faces of Schneider, Bajusz, Váczy, Reichsfeld and Klitscher, the little Austrian barber, gleamed at me out of the darkness. Schneider was not complaining any more: he had been told he was past the crisis. Bajusz was struggling in a heavy fever. He was talking quickly and unconnectedly into the air, and his emaciated arms worked as if he were always warding something off—the flies, the nightmares of fever, or lurking death? . . . Next to him lay Váczy: the disease had fastened on his remaining half-lung. Reichsfeld took no notice of me. He was propped on one elbow, staring with a gloomy, feverish fixity in front of him. He would neither eat nor drink. Even a mug of tea had to be poured down his throat by force. He had a ceaseless apprehension of being poisoned.

Dr. Herz was lying next to Tutschek. When the illness had appeared in the Citadel Tutschek had abandoned his mattress and had set to praying day and night at the feet of the mortally ill or the dead. In the end he too had taken to his

bed. He was completely unconscious now. He died the day after my visit. He never made the slightest effort to struggle against it.

Dr. Herz' case was hopeless.

Dr. Herz had several things to entrust to me. He gave me some letters to his relations in Austria and a little fine gold chain, which he wanted given to one of his sisters. I tried to comfort him, but he smiled queerly, and that pale, tired smile suddenly lit up everything that was in that strange man. Only then I noticed the ravages of the illness, his protruding bones, ashy-grey skin. His face was completely covered by the red beard, his skull gleamed whitely under his thin hair. There were two women's silk scarves wrapped round his throat above the wet rag.

The bearded, deathly pale face fell wearily back, and in the staring eyes the visions of leaden fever were already rising. . . .

I left the dying men's room. The fresh air struck me outside, and I only realised how I had weakened when it seemed to me an eternity before I stumbled into No. 36.

One morning a few days later the sun shone out. That was the first day, since I had been able, that I went out to walk in the yard. But I could scarcely manage one round of it. I set off back to No. 36. There was a considerable crowd gathered in front of the kitchen and of No. 51. The soup was just being brought out of the kitchen in big buckets. At the same moment four prisoners, two and two, were bringing out unplanned coffins from No. 51. The soup fatigue and the coffin-bearers for a moment fell into one procession. Soup dripped from the buckets and from the second makeshift coffin there dripped blood. . . . The prisoners scattered and I tottered into the passage leading into No. 36. . . . In front of the kitchen-window Valéry was standing, reading a French newspaper. When he saw me he reached the paper towards me, saying: 'Now it's certain Transylvania's gone too. The Rumanians are not only in Kolozsvar, but they have occupied

the whole line from Arad through Nagyvárad to Szatmár as well!’

I took the newspaper in my hand, not knowing what it was, why I was holding it, or what Valéry was saying. There were only blood-drops, everywhere blood-drops. They had long ago taken the coffin away out of the yard, and still there were drops of blood, as if soaking and soaking through one huge coffin. . . .

I went back into No. 36, and for a month never came out of it again.

It was as well to be semi-conscious. One day we heard that the convoy of Germans who had left us had been caught by the influenza on the way. Several of them were put out beside the rails two or three stations before the frontier. The train went on and they stayed there, dead. Terrible news came, too, of how the illness was ravaging Germany, Austria and our own country. We did not know if we should find any of our relations or friends alive if we ever reached home. . . . And how much suffering and trial it would mean before the new order settled down in the parts of Hungary which had been taken away. The war was still going on after the Armistice, and now it was against everyone, women, children and old men too. . . . Perhaps the apathy which descended on me then was the life-instinct’s self-defence against all that.

On February 20th quite a large sum arrived for me. That roused me. We were all on the long and often hopeless-seeming road of convalescence, and we needed better food to gain any strength. Now there was money for everything. We had meat-soup every day, bought proper vegetables and food such as we had not touched for months. I procured a little iron stove and some wood, and for the evenings we had an oil-lamp.

At the beginning of March we were all moved out of No. 36. No. 53 had been cleaned out and disinfected, and twenty of us moved in there. I was given a place next to the window,

and having gone to sleep, was woken in the morning by something strange. It was as though someone were looking at me, stroking me. There was no one near me, only the light. It was the first time in Ile d'Yeu that I had been woken by the dawn-light.

CHAPTER XXV

RELEASE

ONE morning at the beginning of April 1919 I was crossing the yard, basin in hand, on my way to the wash-tubs. By then the garrison was no longer so hostilely inclined towards us. The Administrator and the authorities were as strict as ever, but the lesser men, corporals and soldiers, had only pity left. Perhaps they were somewhat puzzled as to why those few wretched, emaciated shadow-figures were still, four months after the Armistice, kept shut up in the Citadel.

We were past asking that of anybody. We did not go up to the Administrator to claim our due bread ration. We did not complain to the Swiss Embassy or to the Red Cross. We wrote to no one and we received letters from no one, and now that Communism had broken out in Hungary we had still less hope of ever receiving news from home. . . . The soldiers and lesser men, unaffected by pride of power and victory, watched us sorrowfully and a little conscience-stricken, as though they were ashamed of what their superiors were doing to us. Sometimes they seemed to want to talk to us. But we passed them without speaking.

That morning I was just going to open the tap of the water-barrel, when the worthy, goat-bearded Bourasso, shouting and waving his arms, came rushing along to show me a telegram, crying:

'Ehben voilá, they are sending you home at last.'

The telegram was as follows: "The Austro-Hungarian internees are to be prepared immediately for transport home."

'I wonder if it is true.' I looked at the order doubtfully.

Bourasso tried by all the means in his power to convince me that this time release had really come. . . . Another time I would have dropped the basin and rushed to the casemates to shout the good news. But now it was not even good news. I went on filling my basin, and only on the way back called into No. 53:

'Heard the news? We're to be let out before long.'

There was no cheering in No. 53. No one believed it. Were the French going to send us home just when there was Communism in Hungary?

Wherever Bourasso showed his telegram he was met with dubious or incredulous faces. He had expected the news to send the whole place wild with joy, and everybody went on doing what he was at. There was nothing to show that after five years freedom had come.

A week later detailed orders for our journey came. First of all we were to go to a big civilian internment camp near Brest, and thence we were to be sent home with the other Austro-Hungarians there. We were to leave any heavy luggage in the Citadel, and it would be sent on to our address after peace had been concluded. Everybody was to take only what he could carry. Three o'clock in the morning of the next day was fixed for our departure.

By then some feeling of pleasure was beginning to penetrate our apathy. But home meant no longer a blaze of welcome; rather, a haze of nerve-racking uncertainty. So much had happened there of which we had not heard and which we could not imagine. . . . The thought of the long journey filled us with an inexpressible anxiety. It seemed impossible we could accomplish it without fail.

At three o'clock in the morning of the appointed day we lined up for the last time in the yard of the Citadel of Ile d'Yeu. The remaining Germans were not coming with us. Of us, Jacob Vantur, old Müller, and Demeter Bistrán had

asked to be allowed to stay in France, since at their age they could not begin a fresh life elsewhere. For the present they were to be kept in the Citadel, and six months later to be sent home.

There were altogether sixty-five of the old Noirmoutier men left at that roll-call. Eighty-three had marched out of Noirmoutier three years ago in the Legion of Misery. . . . There was no Legion of Misery about us now. There was no defiance and no rebellion left in us.

Bistrán, standing among the spectators, pulled me aside to impart a last prophecy.

'Before you go, I must tell you what I'm going to do. You are going to get the whole of Europe and half Asia! . . . Are you satisfied?'

'But, Brother, what sort of a legacy is that?' I said. 'They've cut Hungary into bits, Austria has collapsed, Germany has lost a lot of territory, and now you are playing at being generous with us?'

Bistrán was completely unconcerned:

'I feel the future, and I tell you. . . . What does the present order of things matter? . . . I am not speaking of countries, but of you, and what I give I give to you! . . .'

Bistrán dismissed me with the gesture of a monarch dispensing favours. I said good-bye, too, to Müller and Jacob. Then our procession set off, and at last, with a clashing of chains and bars, the iron gate of the prison opened. . . .

We took four days to go from Fromantine to Brest. We had to pass the night in the first little town on the French mainland, Challans, for our train only started for the capital of the Vendée the next morning.

We roused great interest marching through the little town. The children shouted and ran after us, the passers-by and soldiers stopped in the street to stare. But there was nowhere the slightest demonstration of hostility. Rather only amazed

pity. An old woman with a black head-dress kept on nodding her head and saying: '*Les pauvres, les pauvres!*'

It was a strange procession. We wanted to look at the people with a kind of great love, and yet everybody was afraid of us and looked away as if they had seen something supernatural. And in the place where we were quartered a very strange thing happened to us.

Straw had been strewn on the floor of a big dance-hall, sentries had been posted at the door and in front of the building, and we were ordered to sleep there. But they had left no gangways among the straw, so that when we dumped our bundles down the room was suddenly filled with dust and chaff. Choking, we made for the yard, but there there was no room for us all at once. In the confusion I noticed a little glass door opening out of the yard into a little room where there were some round tables and arm-chairs set out. It was apparently the restaurant belonging to the dance-hall.

At one of the tables there was sitting an elderly French *bourgeois*, and when I looked in through the glass of the door he beckoned to me. I went into the restaurant. The typical little Frenchman stood up, shook hands and invited me to sit down beside him.

'I came along after you the whole way,' said the old gentleman, when I had assured him he could talk French to me. 'This quartering here is impossible. I thought I would look in here to see if I could help.'

I scrutinised the old man, first thinking he was perhaps some crazy old fellow who had been understandably excited by the arrival in such a little town of a whole prison transport. But his dress and manners did nothing to confirm my supposition. I asked him with whom I had the honour to be talking.

It turned out I was sitting opposite one of the rich men of Challans. The big bazaar and the corner-house where the shop was belonged to him. Besides that, he had vineyards and farms.

The old gentleman ordered half a litre of wine immediately, then he put his elbows on the table and looked at me confidentially:

‘Tell me, did you suffer a great deal? Did you hate us very much?’

I said I could not hate peoples and races. I still loved French things and the French people. The country had suffered much, and that explained a great deal. . . . But I could never understand the extraordinary hatred which official France had displayed towards the unfortunate Hungarians all through the War. I condemned the treatment accorded to prisoners, and regretted and damned France’s revengeful, imperialistic post-Armistice policy, which was digging Europe’s grave. . . .

The old gentleman drew a deep breath. He was satisfied. His own opinion he kept to himself. Then he set himself to discovering what I and the other internees needed.

I went back to the others and soon returned with money and a long list of our wants: tobacco, cigarettes, cigars, bread, sausages. The old gentleman undertook the mission willingly, and half an hour later returned with everything we needed and an extra box of cigars into the bargain as a present from himself.

By then it was getting dark. I asked our benefactor if it would not be possible for me to pass the night in that same room, for I could not stand the dust in the other place.

The old man considered a little and then made the following astonishing offer.

‘We will come for you at nine in the evening. I have two grandsons, officers here, and we will find some others to come as well. . . . Don’t go to sleep. We will come at nine o’clock.’

The plan seemed a little adventurous to me. But it was carried out. At nine o’clock a whole party came for me, and took me away with permission of the commander of the guard, and that night I spent with some merry Frenchmen in

a fashion any Hungarian country blood might have done at home.

After that night of freedom, however, came five more weeks of imprisonment. We left Challans the next day at dawn, and on the afternoon of the third day arrived at Ile Longue near Brest. On the way we stopped one afternoon in La Roche-sur-Yon, where the girls of the *maison publique* at the end of the town cooked us food. In Lorient, on the station, we met some American soldiers who provided us with tinned meat, chocolate and tobacco. They too, like our visitors in Ile d'Yeu, made it a condition that we should not give any to the Frenchmen. Brest was full of American soldiers. There were two enormous ships in the harbour waiting to take them back to America. I hardly recognised the harbour. The Americans had enlarged it tremendously. . . . After a half-hour steamer-crossing we disembarked in Ile Longue.

The long, mainly uninhabited island had been made into one huge prison-camp. Rows and rows of huts behind barbed-wire fences had sheltered four or five thousand interned civilians all through the War. Even when we arrived there must have been nearly four thousand there.

We came down a little hill to the flat ground at the entrance to the camp, and saw a little group of men waiting for us. There was a Hungarian friend of mine from Paris, of whom I had taken leave there in the first month of the War, with several other Hungarians. They took charge of us like hosts, hunted out good places for us in the huts and introduced us to the life of the place, which in so big a prison-camp was naturally very different from our little camp of Ile d'Yeu.

On Ile Longue the prisoners were allowed to build what and how they liked, if they paid for it. They had a theatre and a library of their own. The artists could set up their own studios. Every man had enough room in the huts, and he could dispose of it as he liked. The waiters had com-

bined to contrive little restaurants and coffee-houses out of their rooms by day. The camp had a football ground. Discipline was the prisoners' own affair. The ordinary food was bad here too, but as there was a considerable number of well-to-do men among the prisoners—captured by the French off liners coming from America in the first weeks of the War—the poorer men could earn money in their service and did not need to starve. Ile Longue was a rest-cure after Ile d'Yeu.

We stayed in Ile Longue for three weeks, and then at last, in spite of the Ile Longue men's scepticism, orders came for the Austro-Hungarians to start for Switzerland.

We started on the 15th of May, and it took us eight days to reach a little mountain town not far from the Swiss frontier. On the way one of the Austrians from Ile Longue became so unnerved by the excitement of the journey that he cut his throat with his razor. In the dark railway carriage we only realised too late what the wretched man had done. He was put out of the train at Lyons, and only lived a few hours.

In Annecy there was a brand-new model camp waiting for us. This was the final stage of the transport home. We were billeted here in almost villa-like huts built in a mountain valley, with beds, running water, and meat every day. . . . We stayed here two days. Hardly enough, after five years, for us to be leaving France with "pleasant memories," as the Sub-Prefect hoped we should in an enthusiastic speech which he made to us as we stood ready for our journey. Each of us received a slip of paper with a number on it which we had to hang on ourselves somehow, as though the years of imprisonment had left nothing of us but so many numbers. . . .

We were kept waiting a whole night more at the station of Evians les Bains. When the next day at dawn we had at last passed the Swiss frontier an elderly, kindly-faced Swiss nurse came into our carriage with the words:

'Last night a telegram came from the Ministry to say you were to be sent back to your camp. Our Government only stopped that by declaring very energetically that if it was not allowed to take you over it would make a public scandal of the matter. . . .'

Further transport of internees actually was discontinued for a time. The next party was only allowed to cross six months later.

But we were in Switzerland. We crossed that garden-land in wonderful, dream-like weather. At Berne we were welcomed in the name of the Hungarian Red Cross, given money and told what was happening in Hungary. We were assured there was nothing against our going home. The Communist regime could only last a few weeks in any case. . . . The town of Berne gave us a meal and then we got into the train again. In Zürich we were given chocolate and cigarettes by Hungarian ladies who boarded the train.

Feldkirch, the first Austrian station, was flower-decked to welcome our train. The station was full of women and children. Here white bread and chocolate were something of a rarity. We distributed nearly everything we had been given in Switzerland to the children who came clamouring round the train. . . . We left Feldkirch about dawn. We travelled in a dirty, half-wrecked carriage with broken windows. And as we travelled further and further into Austria it became more and more sadly and insistently evident that we were never again going to see the world we had left. Thin, barefoot children clamoured round our train at every stop, and behind them stood their ragged mothers, begging. We gave them everything we had: they were grateful for the stalest crust. The further we travelled the greater grew the poverty and want. We knew now it would be the same all along our road. We were coming to somewhere where men were more wretched than ourselves, for to these others the illusion of freedom, which fanned our faces so refreshingly, meant nothing. Then we were to

cross the frontier of Hungary, where there was not even the illusion of freedom. . . . The world had become a great prison-camp itself, and there was nothing to welcome those returning home.

We spent a day staggering dazedly round Vienna. We got lost among the people and traffic. There was only one reassuring point for us, the railway carriage where we could find the others and where we could remember what we were and what we wanted and where we were going. In Vienna the Austrians left us, and such Hungarians as found their homes were now in the new Succession States. That left only sixty of the Ile d'Yeu and Ile Longue men. Some Hungarian officers who had escaped to Vienna stopped in front of our carriage and argued. One of them told us not to go home to the Reds, and the other told us not to stay in Vienna for we should starve to death. They argued and quarrelled about us, and we stood there quite apathetic, weary to death and conscious only of the one thing, that if for five years we had longed madly and passionately for Hungary, then we must go home now even if the whole country was a graveyard and jackals were all that found a habitation there. . . .

We took two days to go from Vienna to Budapest. That raised to fifteen the number of days, from Brest to Hungary, we had had to spend sitting on wooden benches in the train. We got out of the train in Győr and bought some horse-meat sausages, and I asked one of the station officials if he knew anything about my brother-in-law, who had lived in that town. He said he had died. That seemed natural.

From Győr to Budapest we were only half-conscious. Our eyes kept on falling shut however much we tried to keep them open. We had so often imagined to ourselves our arrival in Budapest, all brilliance and happiness. We were dully dozing when with a tremendous jolt our train stopped for the last time.

A railway official took charge of us, wrote our names in a

ledger, and then anybody who had anywhere to go might go. The rest were taken off to a shelter. I set off for a friend's house in Buda.

We went out of the station. There were very few people in the streets, the shops were shut, the houses neglected and dirty, as though a storm had swept through the town. Everything had aged and grown gloomy and turned its head away wearily, and the red flags hanging everywhere were like big red patches of blood against a smoky haze.

Three of us boarded a tram going to Buda. We stood on the rear platform with our bundles. A thin, shabby little Budapest artisan looked at us curiously for some time and said finally:

'Do the gentlemen come from far?'

'Yes, from internment in France.'

The thin, shabby man looked at us again, scrutinised all three of us thoroughly, then put his hand to his pocket.

'Cigarette?'

The sympathy tore down our stupor. We had returned. From pain to greater pain.

THE END



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